Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables, and Their Politics

HANNA BATATU

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HANNA BATATU

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TO THE PEOPLE OF SYRIA

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PREFACE

In the first two parts of this book attention is centered on Syria's peasantry. An attempt is made to throw into relief the elements of significance in its social differentiation and in the evolution of its mode of life, economic circumstances, and forms of consciousness and behavior. This, it is hoped, will contribute to a better understanding not only of Baʿthism—which, as will be clear from Part III of this work, was really a mantle for a variety of forces with different instincts and frames of mind—but also of the holders of the crucial levers of power since 1963, who had their roots in rural society and had to a large extent been shaped by its historical experience. In the remaining parts of the book the focus of interest shifts to these power holders and, more particularly, to Asad and to the characteristics of his regime and the main lines of his conduct.

This work does not seek to prove or disprove any particular thesis or draw from the accumulated evidence any general theory but to interpret, as accurately as possible, the relevant data on Syria in the country's own historical and contemporary contexts. In many chapters the chosen model involved a progress from low- or middle-level generalizations to the pertinent corroborative evidence.

In the course of my research and during visits in 1980, 1985, 1990, and 1992 to villages in different regions of Syria—in the Ḥawrān, the Druze and ʿAlawī mountains, the Ghūṭah of Damascus, the Ḥimṣ and Ḥamāh plains, and in the neighborhoods of Aleppo and Dayr-iz-Zūr—I received help from many peasants who opened their hearts to me and shed light on various aspects of their life and the vicissitudes in their fortunes over the years. I am also indebted to many other Syrians—writers, journalists, scholars, specialists, businessmen, state and Baʿth party officials, and leaders of opposition movements—who shared with me their views or provided me with their publications, and who are cited at appropriate points in the text or footnotes, or must be left unnamed.

I benefited much from conversations I had at different stages of my work with the late Akram al-Ḥūrānī, the inspirer of the first agrarian movement in Syria's history; the late Michel ʿAflaq and Ṣalāḥ-id-Dīn al-Bīṭār, founders of the Baʿth party; the late Zakī al-Arsūzī, the most prominent leader of the Arab refugees from Alexandretta; Hānī al-Hindī, a leader and founder of the Arab Nationalist Movement; the early Baʿthist or Arab Socialist activists Jalāl as-Sayyid, Dr. Wahīb al-Ghānem, Dr. Sāmī aj-Jundī, Dr. Anṭūn Maqdisī and ʿAbd-ur-Raḥmān al-Mārdīnī; Dr. Ibrahīm Mākhūs, one of the more influential civilian allies of General Ṣalāḥ Jadīd; Colonel ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd as-Sarrāj, chief of Syria's Second Bureau (Military Intelligence) from 1955 to 1958 and minister of the interior in the days of the United Arab Republic; and Colonel Aḥmad al-Mīr, member of the inner core of the Military Committee, which formed the center of gravity of the Baʿth regime of the 1960s.

I owe acknowledgments to the headquarters of the Baʿth Command, which obligingly furnished me with the results of censuses relating to the numerical strength and social composition of the Baʿth party in 1992 and earlier years; to the late Abū Iyād, a leader of the Palestinian resistance, who was generous with his time and allowed me access to the files of the Palestine Liberation Organization on its relations with Syria's regime; to ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn, one-time superintendent general of Syria's Muslim Brotherhood, who patiently answered the numerous questions I put to him; and to Tammām al-Barāzī, a journalist from Ḥamāh, who kindly provided me with the texts of his interviews with the various leaders of the opposition.

For assisting me in various ways I am very grateful to Drs. Peter Clark, Hānī Fāris, Maḥmūd Ḥaddād, ʿAbdallah Ḥannā, Yūsuf Ibish, Volker Perthes, Elizabeth Picard, ʿAbd-ul-Karīm Rāfeq, Fayṣal ar-Rikbī, Suhayl Shaddūd and Andrew Vincent; to Ambassadors David Malone and Richard Murphy; and to my former students—whom I also list here in alphabetical order—Ruba Aṣbaḥī, Dianne Conway, Steve Day, Marius Deeb, Zuhayr Ghazzāl, Maggie Gran Mitchell, Bassām Ḥaddād, Rick Hooper, Murhaf Jouejātī, Jim Reilly, Dalia Salaam, Yezīd Ṣāyigh, Ḥāfiz ash-Shaykh, Raghīd aṣ-Ṣulḥ, and Fawwāz Ṭarabulsī.

I would also like to express my thanks to the French Institute in Damascus for its hospitality; to the Social Science Research Council in New York for awarding me a postdoctoral research and travel fellowship in 1985; to the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University for granting me a sabbatical leave in 1992; and to my former colleagues at Georgetown, Professors Ḥalīm Barakāt, Michael Hudson, Ibrahīm Ibrahīm, Ibrahīm ʿOweiss, John D. Ruedy, Hishām Sharabī, and Barbara Stowasser, for their support and encouragement.

I am specially beholden to Thābet al-Mahāynī, one of the founders and leading figures of the Arab Nationalist Movement and of the Nasserite Alliance of the Laboring Forces of the People and deputy director general or chief executive officer of the Damascus Chamber of Commerce between 1960 and 1983, and executive director of the U.S. Arab Chamber of Commerce in New York from 1985 to 1987, whom I often inconvenienced with questions, particularly on matters relating to Syria's mercantile class, and who was always helpful.

Of course, none of the above-mentioned persons is responsible for the opinions I express in this book, or the generalizations I make, or the errors into which I may have fallen.

I am deeply indebted to my nephew Shukrī ʿAbdallah, who volunteered to word-process my manuscript in memory of his mother and my sister Mary ʿAbdallah-Batatu.

I also express my profound gratitude to ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd Dāmirjī, an esteemed friend, who facilitated the printing of this book by a very generous subsidy to the Princeton University Press.

I am much obliged to Margaret Case for the great care she took in editing the text; and to Madeleine Adams, Benjamin Tate, and other members of the Princeton University Press staff for the kind attention they gave to my manuscript.

Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables, and Their Politics

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CHAPTER 1

The Role of Demographics

BETWEEN THE END of the First World War and the present time marked increases in population occurred in Syria. Although the relevant statistical evidence may be somewhat defective, in particular with regard to the first four decades of this century, the persistence of demographic growth is unmistakable. Syria's population rose from about 1.5 million[1] in 1922 to about 13.8 million in 1994 (consult Table 1–1), that is, more than ninefold. Its average annual growth rate was 3.3 percent in the period 1970–1991.[2]

This growth of population had its beginnings in the nineteenth century and was worldwide in its incidence. As Fernand Braudel has pointed out, its rhythm—registering, despite slowdowns, a continuous rise—differs from that of former times, which was characterized by alternate demographic ebbs and flows.[3]

In Syria the phenomenon was initially related to the revival of agriculture and its gradual or fitful integration into the world trade network. But the rise in population was as much an effect as a cause of the agricultural revival, in the sense that the two phenomena nurtured and reinforced each other. Other factors contributed sooner or later to the advance of agriculture, including the increase in rural security, the growing penetration into the countryside of money and the idea of profit, the stabilization of property rights, the settlement of the bedouins, the introduction of machinery and artificial fertilizers, and the building of roads, railways, harbors, and irrigation works.

If, initially, the rise in population was related to the reanimation of agriculture, its continued growth has been increasingly a reflection of the decline in mortality rates, particularly after World War II. The process is traceable to the restriction of the ravages of endemic diseases, greater access to purified water, better sanitation, increasing public health facilities, improved diets and child health care, and wider utilization of antibiotics. As is clear from Table 1–2, the crude death rate for Syria fell by two-thirds between 1960 and 1991, and in the latter year was, interestingly enough, lower than that for Japan or the United States, assuming the accuracy of the demographic indicators. As is reflected in the same table, Syria appears also to have made much progress between 1960 and 1991 in lengthening life expectancy and reducing infant mortality. This could perhaps be attributed, at least in part, to the marked interest of its regime in the welfare of country people, which is, in turn, explicable by the regime's rural roots and rural constituency. As regards the infant mortality rate, however, it is doubtful that the rural-urban differential has as yet been wiped out; but rural people aged fifty and above appear to live longer than their urban counterparts.[4]

TABLE 1–1
Syria's Total and Rural Population and Its Population Active in Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Forestry (in thousands)

Year	Total Population	Rural Population	% of Rural Population	Population Active in Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Forestry	% of Total Economically Active Population
1922[a]	1,547	n.a.[b]		n.a.[b]	n.a.[b]
1937[a]	2,367	n.a.[b]		n.a.[b]	n.a.[b]
1946[a]	2,950	2,006	68.0	683	n.a.[b]
1960(census)	4,353[cd]	2,668[cd]	61.3	514[cd]	52.1[cd]
1970(census)	6,305[c]	3,564[c]	56.5	747[c]	49.4[c]
1981(census)	9,046	4,790	52.9	495	24.2
1991[a]	12,529	6,194	49.4	924	28.0
1994(census)	13,782	6,732[a]	48.6[a]	n.a.[b]	n.a.[b]

Sources: League of Nations, *The Mandates System* (Geneva, 1945), pp. 86–87; Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 371/75558, XL/A/11723, E4976, Annex B to Letter of 22 October 1948 from H. R. Stewart; Office Arabe de Presse et de Documentation, Damascus, *Recueil des statistiques syriennes comparées (1928–1968),* p. 10; Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Census of Population, 1960 . . . ,* pp. 30–31, 34–35, and 162–63; Syria, Office of Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census in Syrian Arab Republic, 1970*, vol. 1, pp. 1, 39, and 306; *Results of the Population Census . . . , 1981* (in Arabic), pp. 44 and 225; and *Statistical Abstracts, 1991*, p. 60; *1992*, pp. 90–91; *1994*, pp. 62 and 80–81; and *1996,* p. 58.

[a]Estimates.

[b]Not available.

[c]The 1960 and 1970 census takers did not count a great number of women working on family farms.

[d]This figure does not take into account the bedouin elements, who numbered 211,670 in 1960.

Although under ideal circumstances Syria can absorb a larger workforce in its economy, rapid demographic growth has been, at one point or another in the last four decades, an important unsettling factor in Syrian life. In conjunction with other elements, such as recurring droughts and soil degradation, it has increased the pressure on land, stimulated an unprecedented rural exodus, made Damascus and other main cities top-heavy with people and problems, pushed up the cost of food, exacerbated economic inequalities, and indirectly contributed to the rise of the Baʿthists and, eventually, to the partial erosion of the salutary effects of agrarian reform. Conjointly with inadequate productivity, the improvement from the 1950s onward of living standards and the consequent rise in per capita consumption, demographic growth was also responsible for transforming Syria in the 1970s from a net exporter into a net importer of food, thus significantly increasing the country's financial burden.

Between 1976 and 1989, however, there appears to have been a simultaneous decrease in Syria's agricultural population (see Table 1–3). True, the official figures should be viewed with some skepticism. The sharp fluctuations in the size of the farming force that they reflect stem in part from the vagaries of the weather, but may also be due to flaws or changes in sampling methods. The figure for 1976 is probably to some extent a statistical aberration. The pro-

TABLE 1–2
Life Expectancy and Demographic Indicators, Syria Compared with Selected Middle Eastern and Advanced Countries

	Crude Birth Rate per Thousand Population			*Crude Death Rate per Thousand Population*			*Life Expectancy at Birth (Years)*			*Infant Mortality Rate per Thousand (Aged 0–1)*		
Country	*1960*	*1984*	*1991*	*1960*	*1984*	*1991*	*1960*	*1986*	*1991*	*1960*	*1984*	*1991*
Syria	47	45	44	18	8	6	50	64	67	132	55	37
Saudi Arabia	49	43	37	23	9	5	43	63	69	185	61	32
Egypt	44	36	32	19	10	9	46	61	61	128	94	59
Iraq	49	45		20	10		46	63		139	74	
Iran	46	41	44	20	9	9	50	59	65	163	112	68
Jordan	47	46	37	20	8	5	47	65	69	136	50	29
Israel	27	23	21	6	7	6	69	75	76	32	14	9
Turkey	43	30	28	16	9	7	51	65	67	190	86	58
Japan	18	13	10	8	7	7	68	78	79	31	6	5
U.S.A.	24	16	16	9	9	9	70	75	76	26	11	9

Sources: The World Bank, *World Development Reports* (Washington, D.C.) *1982*, pp. 144–45 and 150–51; *1986*, pp. 230–33; *1988*, pp. 222–23; and *1993*, pp. 238–39 and 290–93.

TABLE 1–3
Proportion of Population Employed in Agriculture
in 1970–1984, 1989, and 1991

Year	*Population Active in Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Forestry in Thousands*[a]	*% of Total Economically Active Population*
1970 (census)	747[b]	49.4
1971	892	54.2
1972	908	55.6
1973	858	50.8
1974	864	53.0
1975	918	49.9
1976	578[c]	33.7
1977	756	39.9
1978	671	34.7
1979	687	32.8
1980	687	32.3
1981(census)	495[c]	24.2
1982	705	32.0
1983	715	31.8
1984	571[d]	31.7
1989	675	22.9
1991	924	28.0

Sources: Syria, Office of Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census . . . , 1970*, vol. I, p. 306; *Results of the Population Census, 1981*, p. 225; *Yearly Compilation of Agricultural Statistics* (in Arabic) and *Statistical Abstracts* for various years; and the Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm ar-Rābiʿ,* p. 28; *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm al-Khāmis,* p. 71; and *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-sādis,* p. 53. The latter congress gave the figure 696,200 for the 1981 population active in agriculture but I relied on the figure in the 1981 census, which was published in 1988.

Note: The Syrian government did not publish figures for 1985–1988 and 1990.

[a]The short-run (year-to-year) variation in the agricultural labor force is largely explicable by the vagaries of the weather, but transfer to other occupations and internal and external migration were also involved.

[b]An undercount of female family workers is certain.

[c]It is not clear why the agricultural population dropped so sharply in 1976 and 1981. The indices of total agricultural production for these two years inclined upward (see Table 4–3). It is possible that the 1976 figure is a statistical aberration or that the statistical projections for the earlier or succeeding years are defective. The latter explanation might be true also of the figures for the years preceding or following 1981.

[d]Because of a drought Syrian agriculture was depressed in 1984.

jections for the years preceding or succeeding the 1981 census, which was published in 1988, may be defective. Nevertheless, the decline of the cultivating population in that period was in all likelihood fairly large. Moreover, there are indications that at least some of the owners of small or nonviable farms are now only part-time husbandmen, having been driven by economic need to take second jobs in nearby towns.

The decrease in the farming population in the years in question had its roots in the income differentials between rural and urban laborers, the attractions of city life, the irregularity of rainfall, the depletion from over-use of the subterranean water in some areas, the greater reliance on agricultural machines and on a capital-intensive mode of production, and the sharp swing in the world grain prices. In the second half of the 1970s many peasants in such rainfed regions as the Ḥawrān and Jabal Druze were also tempted to seek their fortunes in the Gulf, but the prospects for these migrant laborers have dwindled with the downward movement of international oil prices after 1981 and in particular after the 1985 precipitous oil price plunge. This factor, added to the relative improvement in the conditions of life in the countryside and the decreasing chances for peasant employment in the cities, may account for what the Peasants' General Union described as "a reverse migration" from urban areas to the villages in the early 1990s,[5] which is reflected in the increase of the agricultural force from about 675,107 in 1989[6] to about 924,274 in 1991.[7] But 1991 was also a year of exceptional rainfall.[8]

One other significant demographic feature is the population's low rate of participation in the labor force, which stood in 1970 at 24.9, in 1981 at 22.7 and in 1991 at 27.8 percent.[9] It is possible that a segment of the unpaid women working on family farms were not officially enumerated. But the low labor participation rate is in large measure explicable by the youthful slant of the population's age structure: in 1994—the latest year for which relevant data are available—44.8 percent of the Syrians were younger than fifteen.[10] Moreover, a high proportion of urban women do not take part in the work force. Both these factors add greatly to the economic burden of the laboring component of the population.

CHAPTER 2

Differentiations

The "Peasant-gardeners" and the "Agricultural Peasants"

There is no such general category as "peasants." The term refers to a variety of social types. One important indigenous distinction is between the "peasant-gardener" (*al-fallāḥ al-bustānī*) and the "agricultural peasant" (*al-fallāḥ az-zirāʿī*).

The peasant-gardeners have always been closely tied to the towns and cities, and live either in outlying urban districts or in the country immediately neighboring them. They have in consequence been affected by European economic penetration earlier and more deeply than other peasants. The incidence of landownership was also higher among them than among the agricultural peasants. Moreover, they enjoyed the advantages or possibilities of occupational combination as early as the seventeenth century, if not earlier,[1] whereas the agricultural peasants were not effectively organized for economic—and political—ends until the mid-1940s.[2]

The prototype of the peasant-gardener is the peasant of al-Ghūṭah, Damascus's lush oasis fertilized by the waters of the Barada River and the site of fruit trees and sparkling streams and rills celebrated in Arab history. The peasants of al-Ghūṭah are now, as they were in the days of the medieval Arab traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, "like the people of the capital city in their ways of living"[3] and have recently drawn increasingly closer to them as many of their villages have become urbanized. They form in this regard a contrast with other peasants such as those of the Euphrates Valley or al-Marj, a district to the east of al-Ghūṭah, who are still, though decreasingly, akin to the bedouins in their values and mode of conduct. So are also, but to a lesser degree, the peasants of the Ḥawrān, a vast fertile rainfed plain in southern Syria, long renowned as the granary of Damascus.

Unlike the peasants of al-Marj or the Euphrates, who are of relatively recent bedouin origin, the Ḥawrān peasants have been growers of cereals for centuries, but for the better part of the Ottoman period they were a species of mobile peasants who wandered from one village to another, actuated by the hope of escaping the harassment of desert tribes or the wanton rapacity of governors, and encouraged by the abundance of cultivable land and the prevalence in their region of the institution of mushāʿ or communal farming. In all the Ḥawrān villages, as the perceptive European traveler Jean Louis Burckhardt observed in 1812, "they find commodious habitations in the [deserted] ancient houses; a camel transports their family and baggage; and as they are not tied to any particular spot by private landed property, or plantations, and find everywhere

large tracts to cultivate, they feel no repugnance at quitting the place of their birth."[4]

As is characteristic of Damascenes from the humbler ranks, the peasants of al-Ghūṭah regularly observe the precepts of their faith. In fact, in the 1960s some of them were so religious that they hesitated to accept land expropriated under the Agrarian Reform Law for fear of infringing Islamic injunctions.[5] Most of their villages have their own mosques and their khaṭībs (preachers) and imāms (prayer leaders), whereas in many of the villages that are distant from the cities, institutionalized religion is discernibly absent. In 1970 there were no fewer than 6,300 villages and upwards of 7,700 daskaras or hamlets in Syria but only 1,173 rural "men of religion," and of these only 241 had formal education.[6] In 1993 there were 6,454 villages and 7,153 hamlets, but there are no up-to-date figures on the number of "men of religion" in the countryside.[7] However, nearly every montane or hilly village has its mazār or center of pilgrimage, which is sometimes a white-domed shrine, built in the manner of the ancient Canaanites on a mountaintop or other high place and marking the burial ground of a revered saint, whom the peasants designate as *walīy* and regard as the protector of the village. Often there is no monument, and the grave of the walīy is merely shaded by an old oak tree growing unperturbed in the midst of fields.[8]

The peasant-gardeners of al-Ghūṭah are incontestably Syria's most skillful husbandmen. The efficient but gentle and heedful manner with which they tend their fruit trees points to an ingrained aptitude passed on from father to son. Love of the land is in their blood, so to say, unlike many of the peasants of al-Marj or the Euphrates, who are averse to cultivation or despise manual labor and, if they could scrape enough money, would quit the plow, buy livestock, and revert to pastoralism.[9] Indeed, a considerable number of these peasants tended, not long after they became Agrarian Reform beneficiaries, to sell[10] or, more often, lease their newly acquired plots to natural husbandmen or men of capital in order to live, as before, by keeping flocks of sheep or shift to more congenial occupations in the rapidly growing cities. But this process was also in part induced by the unprofitableness of their small holdings.

Nearest to the peasants of al-Ghūṭah in skill and attachment to the soil are the orchardists, who work in the valleys of the Orontes River in the vicinity of Ḥimṣ and Ḥamāh, and the enterprising peasants known as Ahl-ul-ʿūd or the "People of the Tree"[11] who live in the long-settled, gently rolling uplands of the region of Idlib, which is rich in orchards and supplies a great portion of Syria's needs of fruits and olives.

The ʿAlawī peasants of the plains are also within their element in agriculture. They have been the principal food producers of the Latakia region for hundreds of years. An English consul who had a long connection with them in the nineteenth century considered them "at least equal in intelligence to [the peasantry] of any country in Europe."[12] A French scholar who studied them in depth in the 1930s threw into sharp relief their "great power of adaptation."[13] But their most salient quality is their capacity for enduring hardships. These traits, added to the

tractability characteristic of the ʿAlawīs of the plains—but not of the montane ʿAlawīs—explain why the great proprietors of the past generally preferred them to the more difficult and less contented peasants of bedouin origin. In the 1920s, for instance, one of the biggest landowning families of the region of Maʿarat an Nuʿmān—al-Ḥarākī—threw out from its villages sharecroppers belonging to the tribe of al-Mawālī and replaced them by ʿAlawī cultivators. Its example was followed in subsequent decades by other landed magnates in the valley of the Orontes.[14] Similar developments must have taken place in the nineteenth century, which may account for the presence of ʿAlawī villages in areas remote from the ʿAlawī mountains, as in al-Marj[15] and in the Jawlān (or Golan), prior to its occupation by the Israelis.[16] These processes also explain in part why the ʿAlawī peasants constitute today the overwhelming majority in the rich Ghāb Valley.

The Pacific Peasants and the Peasants of Warrior Origin

Another relevant differentiation is between peasants who have been of peaceful disposition for many generations and peasants who are descendants of warriors, or who in the not too distant past were organized to a greater or lesser degree with a view to defense and military raids, and for whom wearing arms was part of everyday life and readiness to fight was a necessary element of survival. This distinction is now essentially historical in its significance but, as the tragic events in Lebanon have shown, old habits and old psychologies run deep and do not easily wither away.

The peasants of al-Ghūṭah and the Ḥawrān, Idlib's "People of the Tree," and the ʿAlawīs of the plains, among others, may be included in the category of pacific peasants. More independent, more impatient of oppression, and more prone to ignore or defy measures inconsistent with their interests are the peasants who had once lived as nomads, and of whom the cultivators in the Euphrates Valley and the Jazīrah—the area between the Euphrates and Khābūr rivers—provide a good example. But perhaps the fiercest in their love of freedom and the most difficult to harness politically are the peasants of the mountains, notably the montane ʿAlawīs and the Druze.

To the montane ʿAlawīs, as Jacques Weulersse pointed out in the 1930s, firearms represented "the very symbol of dignity of a man and his best safeguard."[17] But historically the Druze peasants have been tougher and more martial. Gertrude Bell has left us an unforgettable description of the contrast between the bedouin and Druze views of the ghazw, the armed raid. "The spirit of adventure," she wrote in 1907,

> finds full scope in the [bedouin raid]—you can picture the excitement of the night ride across the plain, the rush of the mares in the attack, the glorious (and comparatively innocuous) popping of rifles, and the exhilaration of knowing yourself a fine fellow as you turn homewards with the spoil. It is the best sort of fantasia . . . with a spice of danger behind it. Not that the danger is alarmingly great: . . . the raiding

> Arab is seldom bent on killing. He never lifts his hand against women and children and if here and there a man falls it is almost by accident, since who can be sure of the ultimate destination of a rifle bullet once it is embarked on its lawless course? This is the Arab view of the ghazu; the Druzes look at it otherwise. For them it is red war. They do not play the game as it should be played, they go out to slay and they spare no one. While they have a grain of powder in their flasks and strength to pull the trigger, they kill every man, woman, and child that they encounter.[18]

Perhaps Gertrude Bell was partial to the bedouins, and her view of them somewhat romantic and of the Druze rather severe. Implacability in war is, of course, not a uniquely Druze characteristic: the civil strife in Lebanon and the massacres at Ṣabra and Shatīla showed that Maronite Christians—Phalange members in this case—could also be intense in their ferocity. The vehemence of the Druze derives much of its force from their historic condition as a spiritually and physically beleaguered but unbending minority, an experience unfamiliar to the bedouins.

It was largely by successful raids that in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Druze from Lebanon made the Ḥawrān Mountain (now called Jabal al-ʿArab) their own, giving it their name. It was also by conquest that they acquired the plains to the south. Some of the towns and villages that they seized had long been deserted or seasonally occupied by bedouins, but many others belonged by tradition to the peasants or townsmen of Ḥawrān.[19] For instance, the present chief Druze town, As-Suwaydāʾ, was inhabited in the eighteenth century by two old Ḥawrānī clans, the Sunni Banī Suwaydān and the Christian Daḥdals, who occupied the position of the town's head shaykh by turns.[20] Similarly, the now Druze villages in the vicinity of Ṣalkhad were at that time held by the Sunni Zuʿbī clan.[21] The dispossession of these and other clans and the recurrent armed clashes that it generated inspired the long-standing but now much softened ill feeling between the Ḥawrān and Druze peasants.

The Druze prevailed against the Ḥawrānīs not merely by dint of their martial qualities but also because of their greater ability to cohere for common exploits or in moments of general danger. On such occasions, according to old usage, the whole Druze strength was summoned forth by lighting beacon fires on the highest peaks of Jabal-ush-Shaykh (Mount Hermon).

The "Orthodox" and the "Heterodox" Peasants

Syria's peasants are also differentiable in religious terms. In this respect the least significant numerically are the Kurdish-speaking Yazīdis who live in some twenty villages in the basin of the ʿAfrīn river to the northwest of Aleppo; the Ismāʿīlis, who are concentrated principally around their original center of Salamiyyah and between their old fortress townlets of Qalʿat al-Khawābī, Qalʿat al-Kahf, and Qadmūs; and the Shīʿī Imāmis or Ithnā ʿAshariyyah ("Twelvers"), who inhabit Qabr as-Sitt, a village in the Ghūṭah and the site of the mausoleum

of as-Sayyidah Zaynab (the daughter of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī), and several other villages in the districts of Idlib[22] and al-Aʿzāz.[23]

Next in numerical weight are the Druze, who occupy, apart from the mountain mass of Jabal al-ʿArab, twelve hamlets in Jabal al-Aʿla southwest of Aleppo, five villages in the plain of Idlib,[24] and the Ghūṭah village of Jeramānah, reportedly so named because it was founded in 1898, the year of the state visit to Damascus of the emperor of the Germans Wilhelm II.

Still more numerous are the Christians—largely Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, and Greek Catholics—who are dispersed in various parts of rural Syria, including the Ḥawrān,[25] the country east of Ḥimṣ,[26] the district of al-Ḥasakah in the northern Jazīrah, the coastal region between Ṭarṭūs and Banyās, Wādī an-Naṣāra ("the valley of the Nazarenes") which lies to the southeast of the ʿAlawī Mountains, and where they have a large concentration, and such ancient villages as the Aramaic-speaking, honeycomb-like Maʿlūlā in the westernmost Qalamūn ridge to the north of Damascus.

The ʿAlawī peasants, whose main areas of habitation have already been identified, outnumber the Christians. All the other peasants, a clear majority, are Sunni. They are present in strength in every province except Latakia and as-Suwaydāʾ.

For the distribution of the population by religion there are only rough estimates relating to the period before Syria's independence. They indicate that at the end of 1943 when the population of Syria, excluding the nomads, stood at about 2.86 millions (in 1993 the Syrians added up to nearly 13.8 millions), the Yazīdis formed 0.1 percent, the Shīʿis 0.4, the Ismāʿilis 1.0, the Jews 1.0, the Druze 3.1, the ʿAlawīs 11.4, the Christians 14.1, and the Sunnis 68.9 percent of the whole.[27] However, according to the 1960 census, which is also not without defect, the Christians constituted only 8.3 percent of the then total population of 4.35 millions, not counting the bedouins,[28] who may be reckoned with the Sunnis. This sharp difference in the proportion of Christians, while attributable in part to statistical imperfections, may also be traced to out-migrations in the intervening period. In the absence of other pertinent figures, it is not possible to determine precisely the present relative weight of the various Islamic and sub-Islamic sects.

Religion, particularly after the progress of fundamentalism, has been more a divisive than a unifying force. Even in the past, although it forged bonds between the peasants broader than those of the village or the locality, it seriously impeded the growth among the adherents of the different religions and sects of a fraternal consciousness and the chances of common action. It was only after the rise of nationalism—and later, of socialism—that combined efforts became possible.

Of Syria's religious sects the most exclusionary have been the Yazīdis, the Druze, and the ʿAlawīs. As a rule, one cannot become a member of these sects, one can only be born into them. They all have an acute sense of their own special identity and are actuated by a strong feeling of responsibility to their coreligionists.

From the standpoint of religious belief, the Yazīdis, who are tightly and theocratically organized, have the vaguest points of connection with Syria's other sects, even though they hold the Qurʾān and the Bible in reverence. It is not clear whether there are elements in their faith that link them to Mithra, a god of the ancient Persians, who in later times was often identified with the sun. In response to a delicate probe by Gertrude Bell into the nature of Yazīdi tenets, her guide, who was the son of a Yazīdi peasant, asserted: "Everyday at dawn we worship the sun."[29] The German scholar Th. Menzel denied, however, that the Yazīdi religion includes the element of sun worship.[30] According to an international commission that studied the sect at some depth, the Yazīdis believe in a supreme being whom they call Yasdan, and who is thought to care little about the world and to be so elevated that he cannot be worshiped directly. From him seven great spirits emanated, of which the first and mightiest is Malak Ṭāʾūs, the Peacock Angel. Through this angel Yasdan set the world in being and after that leased it to him for 10,000 years, of which 6,000 have passed.[31] Malak Ṭāʾūs, who is viewed as a fallen but repentant angel, is represented in the form of a bronze or iron peacock, of which there are seven specimens corresponding to the number of great spirits. Six of the figures are carried yearly by minor clergymen called qawwāls from village to village, where they are venerated by the peasants. The seventh peacock figure, the oldest, never leaves the shrine of Shaykh ʿAdī, the center of their religious life which is at Lālesh in the Mosul plain in northern Iraq. Shaykh ʿAdī, who lived in the eleventh or twelfth century, is the legislator of the sect and its chief saint, and apparently forms one with Malak Ṭāʾūs through transmigration.[32]

One thing that characterizes the Yazīdis and that is the cause of the uncertainty about their beliefs is their strong disposition to secrecy. In this respect also the nearest to them have been the Druze and the ʿAlawīs. Indeed in the past, in order to keep the mysteries of the faith even from the mass of their followers, whom they categorized as the juhhāl (the ignorant), the few initiated Druze, the ʿuqqāl—the wise—it is said, used to hide their holy books in the ground and became so confident of their ability to guard their secrets that they maintained that their sect had, from this standpoint, the semblance of "a black ant on a black marble in an obscure night."[33]

There may have been rare exceptions, but as a rule the ordinary Druze peasant belongs to the class of juhhāl and the likelihood is that he would live as a Druze and die as a Druze without having an inkling of the secrets of the faith. If a member of the juhhāl develops a desire to join the body of the ʿuqqāl he has to win their favor and submit to a trial period of two years. If eventually he gains acceptance, he is enjoined to protect the mysteries and instructed to enter into a formal engagement called *al-ʿahd*. "Trusting in our Lord al-Ḥākim, the one, the unique, the immutable . . . ," al-ʿahd reads,

> I . . . son of . . . , being sane of spirit and body and duly qualified, attest on my soul, without compulsion or constraint, that I renounce all the different cults, religions, and creeds and acknowledge nothing other than obedience to our Lord al-

> Ḥākim, revered be his name, and obedience is worship; that in his worship I associate no past, present, or future being; that I commit my soul, my body, my property, and my offspring . . . to our Lord al-Ḥākim . . . and accept all his decrees, be they in my favor or against me. . . . He who attests that there is in heaven no adored god and on the earth no living imām other than our Lord al-Ḥākim . . . belongs to the triumphant muwaḥḥidīn [unitarians]. Signed . . . in the year . . . of the slave of our Lord . . . Ḥamzah bin ʿAlī bin Aḥmad, the guide of those who respond [34] [to the divine call] and the avenger on the polytheists with the sword of our Lord."[35]

The muwaḥḥidīn is the real name of the Druze, and is derived from their belief that al-Ḥākim, the Fāṭimid caliph who ruled Egypt from 996 to 1021, represented God in his unity.[36] They are called "Druze" after one of the earliest missionaries of al-Ḥākim, the Persian Neshtegīn ad-Darazī, who is, however, "abhorred" by the Druze and "cursed" in their religious councils[37] because he "distorted" the content of *daʿwat at-tawḥīd*—"the unitarian call."[38] In the Druze theological system the role of chief guide belongs to Ḥamzah bin ʿAlī bin Aḥmad, a native of Zawzan, a town in the Persian province of Khurāsān. Ḥamzah, who is in an effective sense the principal founder of the Druze religion, published his ideas in Cairo in 1017, which the Druze reckon as the year of the manifestation of the incarnation of the divine being in the human form of the caliph al-Ḥākim.

From the peasants and other juhhāl the religion requires, among other things, virtuousness of speech, protection of the brethren in faith, acknowledgment of the unity of "the Lord" in humanity in every age, acceptance of his deeds, and utter surrender to his will.[39] In the Druze religion these moral rules supersede the basic acts of devotion—prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage, and the profession of faith—enjoined by Islam.

Historically, the Druze sect is an offshoot of Ismāʿīlism. Ḥamzah himself and his earliest followers had been Ismāʿīlis, an extreme Shīʿī group that cut itself away from the Shīʿī Imāmīs in the eighth century.

Doctrinally, the Shīʿī Imāmis are distinguishable in several important respects from the main body of Muslim believers, the Sunnis, who are so called because they accept the Sunnah—the sayings, deeds, and tacit approval of the Prophet Muḥammad—as a source of binding precedents alongside of the Qurʾān. Contrary to the Sunni view of the imamate or supreme rulership over the Muslims as a general interest to be left to the discretion of the Ummah (the Community of Believers), the Shīʿī Imāmis hold that only ʿAlī bin Abī Ṭālib, the Prophet's cousin, and his direct descendants through Fāṭimah, the Prophet's daughter, are legitimate Imāms. Whereas the Sunnis confine the mediation between God and men to the Qurʾān, the Imāmis fix it in the Imāms who, even though mortal, are regarded as bearers of a part of the divine being and, for that reason, sinless and infallible in their interpretations of the Qurʾān and Muḥammad's tradition. The Imāmis acknowledge twelve rightful Imāms (hence their other appellation, Twelvers),[40] and expect a second advent of the last of these, who mysteriously vanished from sight in 878 and to whom are applied

the epithets al-Mustatir (the Hidden) and al-Muntazar (the "Looked for" restorer of the true faith in the last days). In the meantime his intermediaries with the faithful are the mujtahids or the jurists, who have the power of giving independent and authoritative but fallible interpretations of the truths of religion. The murder of ʿAlī, the martyrdom of Ḥusayn, commemorated in miracle plays (the *taʿziyāt*), the reported death by poison of several of the other Imāms, and the persecution of the sect's adherents explain Shīʿism's strong preoccupation with suffering, the centrality of the passion motif in its Islam, and its special appeal to the underprivileged and the oppressed, including segments of the peasantry in such countries as Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria.

The Ismāʿīlis broke with the Imāmis over the issue of the succession to the sixth Imām. They recognized the imamate of the descendants of the latter's eldest son, Ismāʿīl, although Ismāʿīl died in 760, five years before the death of his father. Some Ismāʿīlis declared Muḥammad, son of Ismāʿīl, to be the final Imām, and thus became known as Seveners.

What distinguished the Ismāʿīlis historically was their direct appeal to the dispossessed and their emphasis on secret organization. Their most characteristic idea is their notion of the esoteric or inner (*bāṭinī*) meaning of the Qurʾān, which necessitates an allegorical interpretation of its text, its apparent meaning being but a veil concealing the truth from apprehension by the uninitiated. This esoteric feature of the Ismāʿlis left its imprint upon the religious system of both the Druze and the ʿAlawīs.

There is still a great deal of uncertainty concerning the present beliefs of the ʿAlawīs or, to use their more appropriate religious name, the Nuṣayrīs. Much of the existing information on their rites and doctrines is ultimately derived from a book published in 1859 at Aleppo.[41] Its author, Sulaymān al-Adhanī, a native of Antioch, a former member of the sect and a convert, successively, to Judaism, Sunni Islam, and Christianity, was subsequently assassinated. His work is not devoid of prejudice but is invaluable partly because it embraced an apparently authentic Nuṣayrī manual of unknown authorship, *Kitāb al-Majmūʿ*, a collection of sixteen liturgical chapters.[42] In the pages of al-Adhanī there is also a graphic portrayal of the process of his initiation at the age of eighteen into the "secrets" of the Nuṣayrī faith.

Before receiving instruction in the precepts of the sect and in *Kitāb al-Majmūʿ*, Sulaymān had to go through three initiation ceremonies separated by two probationary intervals, one of forty days and the other of seven months. In the first ceremony, which included his drinking of a cup of wine (the Qurʾān condemns wine as "an abomination"), he was merely prayed over and enjoined to secrecy. In the second ceremony, after partaking of another cup of wine, he was ordered to say the words: "sirr ʿAyn—Mīm—Sīn" (the mystery of ʿA, M, and S) and to repeat this formula five hundred times a day. In the third ceremony, after an elaborate ritual, the chief initiator, the imām, glancing sternly at the novice, said: "will you suffer the cutting off of your head, hands, and feet and not disclose this august mystery?" "Yes," he replied. Twelve sponsors then gave him support and two "men of consideration" vouched for the sponsors. After

that the novice swore three times on *Kitāb al-Majmūʿ* not to betray "the secret of God." Whereupon the imām warned him : "Know, my son, that the earth will not suffer you to be interred in it, should you divulge this secret; and you will no longer enter into human forms—nay, rather when you die, you will pass into degraded vestments, from which there will be no deliverance for you, forever."[43]

The warning of the imām clearly expresses a belief in the transmigration of souls, a point of Nuṣayrī contact with the other mountain peoples of Syria—the Yazīdis, the Druze, and the Ismāʿīlis.[44] Of interest in this regard is David Hume's description of some of the features of the religion of the Britons in Roman times. "The Druids [who were the priests of the Britons]," wrote Hume in 1761, "inculcated the eternal transmigration of souls; and thereby extended their authority as far as the fears of their timorous votaries. They practised their rites in dark groves or other secret recesses; and in order to throw a greater mystery over their religion, they communicated their doctrines only to the initiated, and strictly forbade the committing of them to writing."[45]

One cannot but wonder how the ancient Britons and the mountain peoples of Syria came to share similar beliefs. In any case, the first thing that the new Nuṣayrī initiate learned was, according to *Kitāb al-Majmūʿ*, the meaning of the secret Nuṣayrī letters "ʿAyn—Mīm—Sīn" (ʿA, M, S). ʿA, he was informed, stands for ʿAlī bin Abī Ṭaleb, M for Muḥammad, S for Salmān al-Fārisi. ʿAlī is al-Maʿna or the (hidden) meaning of the divinity. Muḥammad is the Ism, the Name or external expression of ʿAlī. He is also al-Ḥijāb, the veil behind which ʿAlī is concealed. Salmān al-Farisī completes the triad and constitutes the Bāb, the Gate or Communicator of Muḥammad and the bearer of his book.[46] Historically, Salmān al-Fārisī was a companion of the Prophet, a Persian convert and, according to traditional Shī'ī accounts, one of the first Shīʿīs in Islam. He is also highly regarded in Muslim Iran. If our author can be relied upon, no member of any other sect could, at least in his day, be accepted into the Nuṣayrī fold "unless he be a Persian," the reason being the apparent contemporary conviction of the Nuṣayrīs that the Persians were, like themselves, believers in the divinity of ʿAlī.[47]

From *Kitāb al-Majmūʿ*, with which the new initiate was next familiarized, it appears that the Nuṣayrī "mystery" (the knowledge of ʿAyn—Mīm—Sīn) is ultimately traceable to Ibn Nuṣayr or, to use his full name, Abū Shuʿayb Muḥammad bin Nuṣayr al-ʿAbdī al-Bakrī an-Namīrī (chapter 4), and that the most effective role in directing the Nuṣayrīs to "the right religion" was played by Abū ʿAbdallah al-Ḥusayn bin Ḥamdān al Khaṣībī (chapter 1). Ibn Nuṣayr, from whom the sect derived its name, was from Baṣrah and is identified in *Kitāb al-Majmūʿ* as "the Bāb" (Communicator) of Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, the Eleventh Shīʿī Imām, who died in the year 874.[48] Al-Khaṣībī (874–957) was born in Egypt but lived for some time in Junbulā, a town in southern Iraq between Kūfah and Wāsiṭ and the center of the (Ismāʿīli) Qarāmiṭah, the renowned revolutionary and allegedly communistic federation that came into being during the formidable rising of the Zanj—the slaves—(869–883) and found adherents in

the ninth and tenth centuries among peasants and artisans in such countries as Yemen and Syria.[49]

It is also plainly set forth in *Kitāb al-Majmūʿ* that ʿAlī produced Muḥammad out of "the light of his essence," that Muḥammad created Salmān al-Fārisī out of "the light of his light," that Salmān created the "Five Incomparables"[50]—Miqdād,[51] Abū-dh-Dharr,[52] ʿAbdallah,[53] ʿUthmān,[54] and Qanbar bin Kādān[55]—and that the "Five Incomparables" created the earth (chapter 5). According to Shīʿī accounts, Miqdād and Abū-dh-Dharr were, with Salmān, the original Shīʿīs. The other "Incomparables" were also early Muslims and apparently close to ʿAlī.

In the Nuṣayrī view of the universe, as our author maintains, all Nuṣayrīs existed in the beginning as luminous stars, but because they boasted that there were no nobler creatures than themselves the divinity cast them into a lower sphere, creating for them fleshly habitations. Muḥammad, Salmān al-Fārisī, and the "Five Incomparables" do not belong to this mundane sphere but form part of the first seven orders of Ahl al-Marātib—Ranked (spiritual) Beings—who constitute "the great light-world" which is directly under the godhead. They appeared on earth to guide the fallen beings back into the right path and ultimately into their pristine heavenly state to make up the last seven orders of Ahl al-Marātib. Those who persist in unbelief are condemned to be shut up in degraded forms of life.

Perhaps the most important chapter in *Kitāb al-Majmūʿ* is the eleventh, which is entitled "The Profession of Faith." Its most significant passages read as follows:

> God has attested that there is no God but He. . . . Verily, religion in God's sight is Islam. O Lord, we have believed in thy revelation and have followed the Messenger. Inscribe us, therefore, among those who testify to ʿAyn—Mīm—Sīn. Bear me witness, O great Veil; bear me witness, O noble Communicator; bear me witness, my lord Miqdād on the right hand; bear me witness, my lord Abū-dh-Dharr on the left; bear me witness, O ʿAbdallah; bear me witness O ʿUthmān; bear me witness, O Qanbar bin Kādān; . . .;[56] bear me witness, O Ahl al-Marātib and O world of all the pure. I attest that there is no God but ʿAlī Ibn[57] Abī Ṭalib the bald-headed, the adored, and no veil but the lord Muḥammad, the commendable, and no Communicator but the lord Salmān al-Fārisī, the imitable; that the greatest of angels are the Five Incomparables; and that there is no opinion save that of our shaykh and lord al-Ḥusayn bin Ḥamdān al-Khaṣībī, who legislated religion in all lands. . . . I attest that I am a Nuṣayrī by religion, Jundabī[58] in counsel, of the Junbulānī[59] path, Khaṣībī[60] in doctrine, Jillī[61] as to maxims, and Maymūnī[62] in jurisprudence. I stand fast in expectation of the second advent, the brilliant recurrence, the withdrawal of the veil, the lighting up of the thick cloud, the revelation of secrets, the showing forth of the hidden, and the appearance of ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭalib from the eye of the sun, grasping every soul, with the lion beneath him, Dhū-l-Faqār[63] in his hand, the angels behind him, and Lord Salmān before him, while water springs from between his feet, and

> Lord Muḥammad cries out saying: "Behold your God, ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭalib! Acknowledge him, glorify him, exalt him. Behold your creator and provider! Disown him not. Bear me witness, O my lords, that this is my religion and my faith, whereon I lean, whereby I live, and wherein I shall die. ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭalib lives and will not die; in his hand is power and omnipotence; in his gift are hearing, seeing, and understanding. Peace be to us from the remembrance of them."[64]

Are the beliefs expressed in *Kitāb al-Majmūʿ* held by all ʿAlawīs or merely by some? In this regard it is pertinent to direct attention to a formal statement issued in 1973 by eighty ʿAlawī religious personages representing the various parts of the ʿAlawī country. "The factor contributing most to divisions among the people [in Syria]," they declared, "is that they are wanting in the knowledge of the facts about one another." "No society," they added, "is free of alien deviations and a concomitant susceptibility to abuse." Historically, "the Muslim ʿAlawī society was the object of the cruellest slanders" and "diseased souls are still burrowing in the past and reiterating inventions by the enemies of Arabism and Islam." They ended by affirming unqualifiedly that their book is the Qurʾān, that they are Muslim and Shīʿī and, like the majority of Shīʿī, Ithnā ʿAshariyyah or Twelvers, that is, partisans of the twelve Imams.[65] Several decades earlier, in 1936, ʿAlawī men of religion made a similar proclamation. "The ʿAlawīs," they said, "are nothing but partisans of the Imām ʿAlī and the Imām ʿAlī is merely the cousin, son-in-law, and executor (waṣiy) of the Messenger."[66]

Were these affirmations genuinely held beliefs or simply discretionary disguises of their real tenets in the interest of their community, or prudent attempts to smooth away differences between themselves and the more acceptable and increasingly politically conscious main body of Shīʿī believers in the Muslim East? It is significant that when General Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, Syria's ʿAlawī strongman in the second half of the 1960s, voiced apprehensions at the rise of sectarian feelings in the country and his Ismāʿīli minister of information, Sāmī-j-Jundī, suggested as an answer to the problem and a check on the suspicion nursed by the other communities the publication of the secret books of the ʿAlawī sect, Jadīd sharply rejoined: "If we did this, our shaykhs would crush us."[67]

In the early 1970s, however, the Shīʿī Imāmis led by the Imām Mūsa aṣ-Ṣadr, the president of the Supreme Islamic Shīʿī Council in Lebanon, confirmed the ʿAlawīs' "denominational [or doctrinal] unity"[68] with the Shīʿīs and took steps to "break the circle of isolation imposed on the ʿAlawī brethren by deviators and enemies."[69]

Moreover, it appears that there are authentic divisions among the ʿAlawī 'ulamā' on the question of the divinity of ʿAlī. This is clear from the proceedings of an extraordinary "Islamic ʿAlawī Congress" held in an unspecified place in Syria in 1973, some time after the publication of the statement of the eighty ʿAlawī religious personages. The congress was sponsored by "the leaders of the ʿAlawī people" and the more "prominent" of their religious shaykhs. Invitations were extended "only to the sincere ʿulamā'" (of the ʿAlawī sect) whose "sole concern" was "the closing of ranks" and the resolution of the issues on which

they were divided. The purpose was to come out from the congress with "one opinion" grounded in the "the Book and the Sunnah" and with "the hearts united on the worship of God alone." The invited ʿulamāʾ gave pledges obligating them not to disclose beforehand anything about the contemplated congress in order "to guard against opposition from the side of some narrow-minded shaykhs who use religion as a net to catch the [things of this] world."[70]

The chief item on the agenda of the congress related to the issue of the ghulūw or extremism regarding ʿAlī. One of the key participants, "ʿAql aṣ-Ṣāfī,"[71] introduced the subject, admitting that it formed "the principal cause" of the dissension among the ʿAlawī shaykhs.[72] The ensuing debate was dominated by "Shaykh Badr-ud-Dīn Jawhar,"[73] the most authoritative figure in the congress. The root of the problem, he argued, lay in the acceptance by "some theologically backward shaykhs" of some of the tales propagated after the death of ʿAlī by the Sabaʾites whose founder, ʿAbdullah bin Sabaʾ, "a Jew turned Muslim," deified ʿAlī and was, on that account, condemned by ʿAlī himself to "death by fire." (Abū-l-Fatḥ ash-Shahrastānī [d. 1153] maintains, however, in his *al-Milal wa-n-Niḥal* that ʿAlī merely sent him into exile[74]) The Sabaʾite tales, "Shaykh Jawhar" went on, were accepted out of ignorance. The shaykhs who believed in them made no attempt to "reconcile them with the Qurʾān and the Sunnah or with proven evidence." "The Commander of the Faithful [ʿAlī]," he concluded, "cannot say one thing about himself and then another which does not accord with it, for he said to some of his companions: 'I and you are but slaves to a God besides whom there is no other God. He has more power over us than we have over ourselves.'"[75] "But," rejoined "ʿAql as-Ṣāfī,"

> [the believers in the divinity of ʿAlī] might—as they are apt to—retort: "The objection against our belief, on the strength of this saying of the Commander of the Faithful, cannot, from our standpoint, be admitted because his words have a literal meaning and a hidden meaning, the literal meaning being directed to the 'people of the apparent,' who are the common people, and their hidden meaning to the 'initiates in esoteric lore,' who are the elite (*al-Khāṣṣah*) . . . which is confirmed by his saying: 'My outer aspect is an *Imāmah* (imamate) and executorship and my inner nature an impalpable mystery.'"[76]

"Shaykh Jawhar" clinched the argument by rejecting the doctrine of the two meanings of the generally recognized traditional sayings and its attendant discrimination between the faithful as inconsistent with the Qurʾānic verse: "We have sent you as a messenger and admonisher unto all the people."[77] Drawing support from another verse—"Do not bow down to the sun and the moon but to God who created them"—"Shaykh Jawhar" also condemned as idolatrous the practice of some ʿAlawīs who blended their reverence for ʿAlī with that for the moon, ʿAlī's astral symbol.[78]

Of course, the ʿAlawī peasants had no part in this religious debate, which sought to determine for them what they ought to believe. It is possible that at least some of them, submitting to the interpretations of such enlightened ʿulamāʾ as "Shaykh Jawhar," have thrown off the yoke of the old superstitions.

But many others probably continue to be warmly attached to the old religious observances, particularly those revolving around the waliys—the pious men—buried in the white-domed tombs marking many of the hilltops of the ʿAlawī country and whom they have for long viewed as the guardians of their villages. Still others, influenced by the new education and the predilections of the Baʿthists, may have become less passionate for any religious belief and more zealous for the pressing concerns of their daily life.

The Clanless and Clan-linked Peasants

Syria's peasants are also differentiable into peasants with more or less strong clan bonds or with clan ties that are in various degrees of decomposition, and peasants who have lost all traces of clanship and are linked merely in terms of the territorial principle.

The gardeners of al-Ghūṭah, the "People of the Tree" in the Idlib region, the orchardists who live within or in the neighborhood of Ḥimṣ, Ḥamāh, and Aleppo, and the ʿAlawī husbandmen of the Latakia coast and the Banyās plain are clanless peasants.

In the villages of the Euphrates and its main tributaries, al-Balīkh and al-Khābūr, the tribal system is still alive. Thus the cultivators on both banks of the lower Khābūr and of the Euphrates—from the Syrian-Iraqi frontier to al-Buṣayrah—belong to the tribe of ʿAqaydāt. Those on the upper Khābūr and its subtributary, the Jaghjagh, are from aj-Jubūr. On the left bank of the Euphrates, upstream from al-Buṣayrah, lie the plowmen of al-Baggārah. Farther upriver in the district of ar-Raqqah and on the lower Balīkh live the ʿAfādlah peasants, and to the north of them on the Balīkh are the tillers attached to the Fedʿān. Beyond the new Ṭabqah dam the cultivators of the Wildah tribe occupy some fifty villages on the shore of the Euphrates and in the district of Manbij.

To all these peasants apply, to a greater or lesser degree, the remark made in 1973 by a former leader of the Baʿth party and a native of Dayr az-Zūr. "The peasant . . . in our region," he said, "is not an individual but an entire tribe. If he falls victim to an aggression or an injustice, the tribe throws its whole weight in the balance guarding him against abuse and humiliation."[79] But even in the Euphrates region the bonds tying the peasants to their tribes have been loosening under the influence of varying forces. The nature of this process can best be understood by retracing briefly the recent history of one of these tribes, the ʿAfādlah.

During the French occupation (1920–1945), the ʿAfādlah peasants formed part of a tribal order dominated by the chiefs of the Fedʿān, a powerful and armed camel-herding tribe and an offshoot of the renowned ʿAnaizah confederation. In that period its foremost leader was Emīr Mujḥim bin Muhayd, who in 1919–1920 threw his weight against King Fayṣal and in 1921 served the interests of France by subduing on its behalf the Dayr az-Zūr and other regions of the Euphrates. In the 1940s he owned, among other properties, 50,000 hectares

on Mount Ash-Shbayth and dominated the twenty villages surrounding "his capital of Jibb-il-ʿAlī"[80]

The Fedʿān tribal order consisted then of five status groups. At its pinnacle stood the shaykhly families, including those of Fedʿān's two main subtribes. Immediately below them came the families of the heads of the various other subdivisions of the tribe. Third in the scale of prestige were the favored slaves of the dominant shaykhs. To them applied the current tribal saying: "The slave of the shaykh is a shaykh." The rank-and-file Fedʿān tribesmen made up the fourth status group. At the very bottom stood al-lafīf, literally, "the attached," or al-atbāʿ, the "followers" or "subjects." The ʿAfādlah peasants, including their shaykhs, were regarded as atbāʿ and had to pay the khuwwah or protection tribute to their overlords. They were held in check by means of a specialized 2000-strong standing army recruited from the zkurt, an appellation given to uprooted persons who belonged to no tribe and served for hire. At one point, in 1941, the ʿAfādlah took the side of the Wilda, a neighboring cultivating tribe, to whom they were related by kinship, when it refused to pay the tribute to the Fedʿān chiefs, but this only led to what is known locally as "the Massacre of the Wilda" in which over one hundred Wilda men are said to have perished. The ʿAfādlah did not succeed in shaking off the yoke of the Fedʿān until Syria's independence in 1946, when the national state established its own authority in the area and put an end to the Fedʿān's coercive power.

The institution of national order was not the only factor that tilted the regional social balance in favor of the ʿAfādlah and other agricultural tribes. The introduction in the second half of the 1940s of modern agricultural machinery into the Euphrates valley had a similar effect. The shaykhs of the ʿAfādlah accumulated so much wealth that by 1951 the Fedʿān chiefs were no longer interacting with them as inferiors but as andād, equals. This was symbolized by the marriage of Fayṣal al-Huwaydī, a chief of the ʿAfādlah, to the daughter of the Fedʿān Emir Mujḥim bin Muhayd. Simultaneously, however, an economic differentiation within the ʿAfādlah developed and sharpened. The yearly income of one of the ʿAfādlah shaikhly families grew from 50,000 Syrian pounds in 1950 to 1,400,000 Syrian pounds in 1963. The tribe increasingly split into landed shaykhs and subshaykhs and landless sharecropping rank-and-file tribesmen. The mushāʿ land, that is, the land collectively owned by the tribe, had been divided up and transformed into private property under the impact of the advent of mechanized agriculture, the advance of the money system and the profit motive, and the intensifying change from a subsistence to a market-oriented economy.

The abolition of the tribal law by the state in 1956 and the implementation of the Agrarian Reform Law of 1958 and the related decrees of 1963–1964 undermined the social power of the wealthy shaykhs, and led after 1966 to the demise of their political influence, at least at the national level. The same measures contributed to a further weakening of tribal bonds. The division of property also decreased the cohesion of the extended family.

The peasants, however, still retain their tribal designations and many still live together on their old territory. The effective economic unit is no longer the

tribe, of course, but the individual household. But the fidelity of the members of the tribe or the tribal fraction to one another has not been swept away, and the old norms continue, if diminishingly, to govern social relationships. The old conceptions also survive and are dying only gradually.

The appeal of the Baʿthists in the region of the ʿAfādlah—the Raqqah region—was initially (in the 1950s and 1960s) strongest among young students stemming from tribal groups of inferior status or from groups that were marginal to the tribal system. Between 1966 and 1970 the head of the Peasants' Union Bureau in ar-Raqqah was an educated descendant of a shaykh's slave, and the provincial Baʿth party secretary was a former school teacher and the son of a vegetable vendor.[81]

However after 1970, that is, in the period associated with Ḥāfez al-Asad, some of the chiefs of agricultural tribes or subtribes appear to have recovered a degree of their local influence. To this points the election of Jāsim al Mḥaymid al-Huwaydī, a chief of the ʿAfādlah, to the People's Assembly in 1973,[82] and of ʿAbd-ar-Razzāq al-Huwaydi, another chief of the ʿAfādlah, to the Raqqah Provincial Council in 1972[83] and to the People's Assembly in 1977.[84]

Although it is hazardous to generalize from the conditions of one part of the country to those of another, it may be put forth as a tenable hypothesis, on the basis of evidence for the Ḥawrān plain, that the old clan system has been least disturbed in the rural districts which in the preagrarian reform period were not characterized by large concentrations of ownership in land. In practically every village of Buṣra, a Ḥawrān district of preponderantly small or middle-sized landed proprietors, the same clan that controlled local politics during the French occupation is still preeminent under the Baʿthists. Thus in the village of as-Ṣamād, which includes about 1,500 inhabitants belonging to eight clans,[85] the office of headman or shaykh al-balad has been filled uninterruptedly by members of the clan of ash-Shuyūkh since at least 1925.[86] In Jimrīn one of the three native clans, the Kafārnah, has provided the mukhtārs or chiefs of the village for "many decades."[87] In several other neighboring villages, including Ghaṣm, Maʿarbah, and as-Sammāqiyyāt, the clan of Āl Miqdād has been predominant since Ottoman times.

Āl Miqdād also constitute the leading clan in the rural town of Buṣra, which is peopled by seven Sunni clans[88] and some fifty Shīʿī families, the whole numbering about 12,000 persons. The Shīʿīs, who are for the most part laborers and artisans, are relatively recent arrivals and hail from the Lebanese town of an-Nabaṭiyyah. Āl Miqdād are not Buṣra's oldest descent group. They migrated from as-Suwaydā some 250 years ago. The oldest clan is al-Ḥamd, a light-skinned people who have often blond hair and blue eyes and claim descent from a Roman governor of ancient Buṣra but, according to other Buṣrites, stem from the Crusaders. Al-Ḥamd own only one qurʿa of Buṣra's agricultural lands which add up to 16.425 qurʿas, whereas Āl Miqdād own about 12, each qurʿa being equal to 10,000 dūnums or 1,000 hectares.[89] The superior social weight of Āl Miqdād is also reflected in the fact that its members dominate the more important activities in the town. Thus in 1980 the shaykh al-balad of Buṣra, the

imām or prayer leader of its central mosque (the ʿUmarī Mosque), the chief of its bureau of antiquities, the owner of its principal coffeehouse, and the manager of its carpet workshop were all from the Āl Miqdād clan.[90]

Āl Miqdād have been well connected since at least the turn of this century. They exercised influence at the Mā-bayn—the office of the sultan's chief chamberlain—in the days of Sultan ʿAbd-il-Ḥamīd (1876–1909).[91] They had a representative in the Turkish parliament—Majlis al-Mabʿūthān—under the Young Turks[92] and in the Syrian parliament during the French Mandate[93] and in the post-independence period.[94] After the coming of the Baʿthists to power, one of their members, ʿAbd-ul-l-Ḥamīd al-Miqdād, became the governor of the province of as-Suwaydāʾ, and from 1966 to 1970 served as a member of the Baʿth (regional) Command, the highest party organ. Subsequently another member of the clan, Khālid ʿAbd-ur-Raḥīm al-Miqdād, was elected to the Council of the Province of Darʿā (Ḥawrān).

Under President Ḥāfiz al-Asad, the town of Buṣrah and its adjacent villages appear to have been pretty much left to their own devices. In a political sense, the difference between Buṣra's present conditions and those prevalent, say, in the days of the French is that whereas then the town's dominant clan answered to the French Conseiller at Darʿā, it now answers to Darʿā's Baʿthist governor or Baʿth party branch secretary.

But there have been important changes in the economic and social life of Buṣra district. In terms of agrarian relationships, the basic differentiation within its clans is now between small landowners and wage laborers and not, as in the preagrarian reform period, between small landowners and murābiʿs or sharecroppers who were so called because they were allowed only one-fourth of the proceeds of their labor, regardless of how bad the harvest turned out to be. The influence of the Damascene merchants and creditors, which had permeated local society down to the late 1950s, has also been broken. Buṣra's shopkeepers are no longer, as formerly, Damascenes but native Buṣrites. This process has been assisted by the savings piled up by many of the local townsmen and villagers who went to work in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia. The copious flow into the district of earnings from abroad, conjoined with the rapid advance of education, could not but have had a corrosive effect on its traditional clan life. It is interesting that Āl Miqdād did not trouble to elect a new formal chief after the death of their last shaykh a decade or so ago. Moreover, they no longer live, as in the past, exclusively in the eastern quarter of the town. Similarly, the physical clustering of the other clans has become much less pronounced. Intermarriages between clans have also increased considerably. There are matrimonial alliances even between Sunnīs and Shīʿīs, but not as yet with the Druze of neighboring areas, who are themselves exclusionary in tendency and have had in recent memory bitter disputes over land, especially with Āl Miqdād. But within the district the sense of belonging to one community is perceptibly growing.[95]

In the Ḥawrān as a whole the most numerous agricultural clan is that of az-Zuʿbī. It is spread in at least sixteen villages in the districts of Darʿā and Izraʿ,

but its center during the lifetime of its last chief, Shaykh Muḥammad Mufliḥ az-Zuʿbī, was the village (*kharbat*) of al-Ghazālah. In terms of prestige and political influence it was surpassed in the pre-Baʿthist period only by the clan of al-Ḥarīrī, which was dominant in eighteen villages in the same districts, and had its main seat at Dāʿil to the north of the town of Darʿā. During the French occupation the two clans became rivals: the chief of the Zuʿbīs identified himself with the French, the chief of the Ḥarīrīs with the nationalists. In the postindependence period the Ḥarīrīs naturally benefited from their services to the nationalist cause but their last paramount chief, Shaykh Aḥmad Jamāl al-Ḥarīrī, who died in 1973, drew strength also from his links with the Saudi Arabians, who gave him a regular stipend, and from an alliance he formed with Shaykh Lawrence ash-Shaʿlān, a multimillionaire, owner of some 50,000 head of sheep, and a leader of the Ruwala, an important bedouin tribe.[96]

Under the Baʿthists the top shaykhly stratum of both clans declined economically and politically, but the Zuʿbīs as a clan now exceed the Ḥarīrīs in influence. This may be traceable in part to the footing that lower-ranking members of the clan acquired in the Baʿth party. In fact, the Zuʿbīs have had, by accident or design, a representative in every major Baʿthist faction since 1963. Mūsa az-Zuʿbī, a member of the National Council of the Revolutionary Command in 1963–1964 and chief of the Missile Corps in 1965–1966, was a prominent ally of Amīn al-Ḥāfiz, the first-Baʿthist head of state. Muḥammad az-Zuʿbī, a former schoolteacher and a member of the Baʿth Regional Command from 1964 to 1966, was a supporter of General Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, Syria's strongman in the second half of the 1960s. On the side of President Ḥāfiz al-Asad from 1970 onward has been Maḥmūd az-Zuʿbī, secretary general of the General Federation of Trade Unions from 1971 to 1978, a (candidate or full) member of the Baʿth Regional Command since 1975, the speaker of the People's Assembly from 1986 to 1987, and the prime minister since June 1987.

In the Jabal al ʿArab or the Suwaydāʾ province, another region of predominantly small and medium-sized properties (before the agrarian reform), the clan system, if now palpably enfeebled, had still some vigor even in the 1960s. As in the case of the Sunnis of the Ḥawrān plain, the montane Druze functioned within a hierarchical order of clans that involved an unequal distribution of prestige and social power. The clan of Banī al-Aṭrash formed the highest layer of this hierarchy. It consisted of three major subclans,[97] and lived and dominated in no fewer than sixteen rural towns and villages.[98] The base of its power was in the southern Jabal al-ʿArab in which, with some interruptions, it exercised authority of a greater or lesser effectiveness—and more often in practice rather than formally—from the middle of the nineteenth century down to 1963. Its influence was also felt in the northern parts of the mountain, but here it had to compete with two other clans that ranked next in importance: the Banī ʿĀmer,[99] who were composed of six splinter groups[100] and carried weight in eleven villages;[101] and the Ḥalabiyyah, who had or shared superiority in several villages in Wādī-l-Liwa.[102] Two clans—Banī Abū ʿAssāf[103] and Banī Abū Rās[104]—stood

out because they had furnished many of the holders of judicial office in the Druze country.

But in terms of religious influence none could or can compare with Āl al-Hajarī of Qanawāt, Āl al-Ḥinnāwī of Sahwat Balāṭah, and Āl aj-Jarbūʿ of as-Suwaydāʾ, who have provided for several generations the *shuyūkh al-ʿAql*, the highest religious chiefs of the Druze. Significantly, the line of distinction in the social sphere did not coincide with that of religion which marked off the shuyūkh al-ʿAql and the men of religion inferior to them—the *ajāwīd*—from the mass of the *juhhāl* (the "religiously ignorant"). In Jabal al-ʿArab there are only three shuyūkh al-ʿAql but hundreds of ajāwīd. The latter have in each rural town their own marshal—the *sāyis*—an office that tends to be hereditary in the same family. Although the Banī al-Aṭrash, Banī ʿĀmer, and Ḥalabiyyah ranked high in the social scale, they belonged from the religious standpoint to the order of the juhhāl, except for the very few among them who received instruction in secret Druze knowledge.

The social position of the dominant clans was first seriously threatened in 1889. Roused to action initially by rivals of the paramount chief of Banī al-Aṭrash, the peasants, who had no property rights, turned against all the shaykhs of villages, driving them away and taking possession of the land. A compromise worked out by the religious leaders did not endure. Peasant unrest revived and sharpened, and in 1890 the village shaykhs were once again swept aside. Banī al-Aṭrash now appealed to the Ottomans who, intervening, reinstated the shaykhs in their old position. But one lasting result of the rebellion was a shake-up in agrarian relations. The peasants acquired the right to own property and from this time forth many of them became landowners.

The strength of their common religious tie helped to restore harmony between the socially preeminent and peasant clans. The recurring attempts by central governments—Ottoman, French, and Syrian—to subdue the Mountain had the same effect. Social accord was also promoted by the narrow economic distance between the different clans. There were never any great fortunes in the hands of Banī al-Aṭrash or Banī ʿĀmer, and the Druze peasants generally derived a tolerable existence out of their rainfed soil—but often not before a struggle with it for the last ounce it would yield. An additional factor contributing in the long run to the consolidation of the standing of the prominent clans was the association of many of their members with the Druze rising of 1925–1927 against the French occupiers. It was, of course, the prestige of these particular members that was enhanced in the first place, but they were authentic representatives of the clan system and their moral gain was concomitantly a gain for their clans, even though some of them gave voice to nationalist sentiments, and the rising itself was conducted under the watchword "Religion is for God and the Homeland for All."[105]

The social significance of the rising of 1925–1927 may be gleaned from the fact that from among the more distinguished of its participants descended most of the Druze Baʿthists who attained national prominence in the 1960s, namely,

Ḥamad ʿUbayd, Shiblī al-ʿAysamī, Salīm Ḥāṭūm, and last but not least, Manṣūr al-Aṭrash.

Ḥamad ʿUbayd, a descendant of a family of rural notables and middling landowners from as-Suwaydāʾ, a son of a "martyr" of the 1925–1927 uprising, and the grandson of ʿAlī ʿUbayd, one of its prominent participants,[106] was a member of the Baʿth Regional Command and the Baʿth Military Committee or Military Bureau from 1963 to 1966, the commander of the seventy-second Armored Brigade at Qaṭanā in 1964–1965 and the minister of defense in 1965.

Shiblī al-ʿAysamī, a former schoolteacher and a son of another leader of the Druze rising—Yūsuf al-ʿAysamī, a landed shaykh from the village of Imtān—was a member of the Baʿth National Command from 1964 to 1966.[107]

Salīm Ḥāṭūm—a nephew of Kāmel and Fawwāz Ḥāṭūm, who "died as martyrs," and the son of Dhūgān Ḥāṭūm, a director of census, a middle landowner from Dhībīn, a village in the district of Ṣalkhad, and an active participant in the Druze rising[108]—was chief of a key commando unit in the 1963 "revolution" and the 1966 coup, and a member of the Baʿth Regional Command in 1965–1966.

Manṣūr al-Aṭrash, a former lecturer in Arabic literature at the University of Damascus, a native of the country town of al-Qurayyah, and the son of Sultān Pasha al-Aṭrash, the chief figure in the 1925–1927 rebellion,[109] was a member of the Baʿth National Command from 1964 to 1966.

Manṣūr al-Aṭrash was the only Druze Baʿthist of note who stemmed from a high-ranking Druze clan. ʿUbayd, al-Aysamī, and Ḥāṭūm sprang from clans of intermediate status. The Druze Baʿthists who rose to membership of the Baʿth Regional Command under Ḥāfiz al-Asad, that is, since 1970—Ḥadīthah Murād, Ḥamūd al-Qabbānī, and Tawfīq Ṣalḥah—came from middle-ranking or humbler families.[110]

After the coming of the Baʿthists to power, the sense of clan remained lively among the aristocratic Druze. For example, the Aṭrash clan, which counts now about five thousand members, still has its own chief, al-Amīr Salīm al-Aṭrash, who was invested with the "cloak of leadership" (*ʿabāʾat-iz-zaʿāmah*) in 1984 by the three shuyukh al-ʿaql of the Druze Mountain.[111] Similarly, the Banī ʿĀmer continue to have an amīr (Nawwāf ʿĀmer) at ash-Shahbāʾ.[112] But the position of these chiefs is more moral or symbolic than political in its significance. Moreover, among the rank-and-file Druze peasants clan ties are now far less important than the bond of religion or the territorial or village connection. Their regard for the old aristocratic clans has also noticeably declined. As one Druze peasant from ash-Shahbāʾ put it in 1985 in a conversation with this writer: "in the past the Banī ʿĀmer were in a position to humiliate everybody; now a simple peasant can humiliate the Banī ʿĀmer."

The persisting political relevance of the clan is glaringly revealed, however, in the behavior of the Baʿth Military Committee, which constituted the center of gravity of the Baʿthist regime between 1963 and 1966. In the words of the one-time secretary general of the Baʿth party, Munīf ar-Razzāz, "The Military Committee introduced into the military organization of the party—as into its civilian

wing—without prior party directives, a great number of persons out of considerations of kinship, friendliness, or clan membership."[113] Ar-Razzāz was primarily, though not exclusively, referring to the conduct of the ʿAlawī members of the Military Committee. Similar tendencies manifested themselves in the period associated with Ḥāfiz al-Asad during the reorganization of the army and the officer corps and the concomitant creation of special politically relevant striking units, as will be exemplified in Chapter 18, where an attempt will be made to look searchingly into Syria's structure of power.

The Landed and Landless Peasants, the Traditional Urban Landowners, and the Modern Mustathmirs

The agricultural population is, of course, also differentiable economically. The first line that may be drawn is between those who own and those who do not own land. Other dividing but interweaving lines are between the large, middle, and small proprietors, or between the landowners who have an abundant or more or less regular water supply and those who still depend upon erratic climatic conditions, or between the landowners who are rich in money and those with moderate or little or no capital. Landlessness does not necessarily signify economic powerlessness; of increasing importance in Syria's agricultural life after 1973 is the mustathmir (the investor), who often does not own but leases land or merely brings his capital to bear upon production in the form of money and modern machines.

The relative numerical weight of the various economic groups may be inferred from the figures set out in Tables 2–1, 2–2, and 2–3. There are no official data on the distribution of private landholdings for the period after 1970–1971, but the figures in Table 2–3 relating to the employment status of Syrians active in agriculture, animal husbandry, and forestry are of value for an understanding in broad terms of the class structure in the Syrian countryside in the 1980s and early 1990s.

As a rule, the "wage earners," who may be employed on a seasonal or more permanent basis, the "workers paid in kind," and the "unpaid workers laboring for other than their own kin," are landless. However, the category "wage or salary earners" includes a relatively small number of agronomists, veterinarians, farm managers, and agricultural supervisors who may own land. In fact, in the distribution of agrarian reform lands priority was given to holders of degrees in agriculture and related technical fields. The "unpaid family workers" are offspring of small or middling landed peasants and, in most instances, prospective inheritors of holdings not large enough to make it possible for them to be self-supporting. The great majority of the "self-employed" are small peasant proprietors who hold, as a rule, under ten hectares (but more in regions of low rainfall), and may be subdivided into owners of draft animals and others—the smaller number and the poorest—who have, or had in the past before the estab-

TABLE 2–1
Distribution of Private Landholdings in 1951, 1958, and 1970–1971 (in thousand hectares)

Size of Holding (in hectares)	*Estimate[a] of Area of Holdings in 1951*	*% of Area*	*Estimate of Number of Holders in 1958*	*%*	*Fully Owned Holdings in 1970–1971*			
					Number Owners	*%*	*Area of Holdings*	*%*
Under 10	1,097	17.3	284,246	97.3	292,983	75.4	848	23.5
10–100	2,892	45.6			92,621	23.8	2,116	58.7
Over 100–300	2,349	37.1	8,027	2.7	2,609	0.7	381	10.6
Over 300					542	0.1	258	7.2
Total	6,338	100.0	292,273	100.0	388,755	100.0	3,603	100.0

Sources: 1951 from Doreen Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East* (London. 1957), p. 83; 1958 from Yūsif A. Ṣāyigh, *The Economies of the Arab World. Development since* 1945 (London, 1978), p. 256; and 1970–1971 from Syrian Arab Republic, Ministry of Agriculture and Agranan Reform, *1970–1971 Agricultural Census. First Stage—Basic Data*, pp. 168–70.

[a]By Cadastral Survey Office.

lishment of local cooperatives in their villages, to depend for cultivation entirely on their physical strength.

The "employers" comprise middle-size and rich landed peasants, traditional urban proprietors of agricultural land, and modern landowning or leaseholding, or merely machine-possessing or money-investing, mustathmirs. Of course, since 1963 the class of "employers" has been only partly made up of the same

TABLE 2–2
Landholders and Their Area of Holdings in 1970–1971 According to the Distribution of the Economic Return of Holdings

Category of Landholders	*Number of Holders*
Holders for their own account	276,318
Holders for the account of their families	66,238
Holders who are partners by contributing labor	27,633
Holders who are partners in land	29,060
Holders who are financing partners	1,155
Holders who are labor and land partners	17,155
Holders who are labor and financing partners	28,897
Holders who are land and financing partners	9,778
Holders who are labor, land, and financing partners	12,305
Total	468,539

Source: Based on figures in Syrian Arab Republic, Central Statistical Office, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, *1970–1971 Agricultural Census,* pp. 30, 34, 38, 42, 46, 50, 54, 58, 62, and 66.

TABLE 2–1 (Continued)

Leaseholdings in 1970–1971				*Mixed Holdings*[b] *in 1970–1971*			
Number of Holders	*%*	*Area of Holdings*	*%*	*Number of Holders*	*%*	*Area of Holdings*	*%*
28,430	63.2	103	15.1	24,851	71.4	86	22.4
15,685	34.9	338	49.6	9,647	27.7	222	57.8
565	1.3	89	13.0	248	0.7	38	9.9
279	0.6	152	22.3	79	0.2	38	9.9
44,959	100.0	682	100.0	34,825	100.0	384	100.0

[b]That is, holdings that are partly owned and partly leased.

individuals who formed its constituent elements before 1958. In other words, individuals or families left and other individuals or families entered the class on a large scale. The mustathmirs are the chief vehicle for the progress of capitalism in agriculture and, as a rule, consist of the larger landowners or leaseholders, particularly in irrigated areas or areas of high rainfall—that is, owners or holders by lease of more than one hundred hectares, or landholders who are partners in land, or financing partners, or both land and financing partners (consult Tables 2–1 and 2–2).

The sharp decrease in the number of agricultural "employers" and "wage earners" between 1960 and 1972 and the simultaneous sharp increase in the

TABLE 2–2 (Continued)

	Area of Holdings (in thousand hectares)				
		Arable Land			
%	*Non-Arable Land*	*Rainfed*	*Irrigated*	*Total*	*%*
59.0	129	1,786	214	2,129	45.6
14.1	53	696	65	814	17.4
5.9	5	124	75	204	4.4
6.2	23	561	25	609	13.1
0.2	1	26	17	44	0.9
3.7	7	87	44	138	3.0
6.2	11	284	56	351	7.5
2.1	10	198	30	238	5.1
2.6	7	99	33	139	3.0
100.0	246	3,861	559	4,666	100.0

TABLE 2–3
Syrians Active in Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Forestry According to Their Employment Status in 1960, 1972, 1984, 1989, and 1991

Employment Status	*1960*[a]	*%*	*% female*	*1972*[de]	*%*
Employers	39,795	7.7	1.2	25,850	2.8
Self-employed	160,761	31.3	0.6	364,656	40.2
Wage or salary earners	191,231	37.2	8.5	128,288	14.1
Workers paid in kind	—[b]		—[b]	4,885	0.5
Unpaid family workers	120,631[c]	23.5	27.1[c]	380,758	42.0
Unpaid workers laboring for other than own kin	1,411	0.3	6.9	3,268	0.4
Not stated	113	0.0	8.0		
Total	513,942[ac]	100.0	9.8[c]	907,705[e]	100.0

Sources: Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Census of Population in 1960,* pp.162–63 and 166–67, Syria Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Natā'iju Baḥth-il-'Ayyinah as-Sukkāniyya l-il-Quuwat-il-Bashariyyah Wa Quwwat-il 'Amal fi-l-Quṭr-il-'Arabi-l-Sūrī* (Results of the Study of the Population Sample for Manpower and the Labor Force, September 1972, Tables 19 and 20; and Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract,* 1986, pp.106–7; *1991*, p. 90; *1992*, p. 90, and *1996*, p. 84.

[a]Does not take into account bedouin elements.

[b]Apparently ignored by 1960 census takers.

[c]It is obvious that a great number of women working on family farms were not counted.

[d]No separate figures on the female component of the agricultural labor force were given.

[e]Because of droughts, Syrian agriculture was depressed in 1984 and 1989. By contrast, 1972 and 1991 were good years for agriculture. There was also a drop in the agricultural labor force in the

number of "self-employed" and "unpaid family workers" reflected in Table 2–3 are clearly the effects of the agrarian reform measures of 1958 and 1963. So are also, obviously, the important shifts in the pattern of land tenure mirrored in Table 2–1.

The successive ceilings on private landownership decreed in 1958 and 1963 are indicated in Table 2–4. Elements of their impact, other than those just specified, can be gleaned from Tables 2–5 and 2–6. A number of facts stand out. First, the major agrarian reform—that of 1958—affected 3,247 individuals, who constituted only 1.1 percent of all landholders but controlled more than one-third of Syria's cultivated land. The 1963 decree affected 1,372 additional individuals. The areas of their holdings subject to the reform added up to 48,767 hectares. Second, the reforms made their deepest dent in the agrarian structure of the provinces of al-Qunayṭrah, Damascus, al-Ḥasakah, Ḥimṣ, ar-Raqqah, Aleppo, Idlib, and Ḥamāh, and only lightly ruffled the pattern of land tenure in the provinces of Latakia, Ṭarṭūs, as-Suwaydā' (the Druze Mountain), and Dar'ā (the Ḥawrān plains). Within the province of Damascus, however, the Ghūṭah proper was only nominally affected: only 2,960 of Ghūṭah's more than 40,000 hectares were expropriated.[114] It is also quite plain that the reforms involved 22 percent of Syria's cultivated land, and that up to 1975 the state redistributed only 33.3 percent of the total area of expropriated lands to peas-

TABLE 2-3 (Continued)

1984[ef]	*%*	*% female*	*1989*[e]	*%*	*% female*	*1991*[e]	*%*	*% female*
49,690	8.7	3.6	137,004	20.3	3.7	131,282	14.2	3.9
262,010	45.9	5.9	185,659	27.5	3.9	283,264	30.6	4.7
68,461[e]	12.0	22.6	104,134	15.4	22.0	146,597	15.9	41.6
191,236[g]	33.4	57.3[g]	248,310	36.8	58.9	363,131	39.3	59.1
571,397[e]	100.0	24.1	675,107[e]	100.0	26.9	924,274[e]	100.0	31.8

1980s by dint of peasant migrations to the cities and towns. Since 1989 there has been a reverse movement to the villages.

[f]Provisional figures.

[g]An undercount of female family workers is possible.

TABLE 2–4
Maximum Limit of Individually Owned Landholdings
under Agrarian Reform Laws or Decrees of 1958, 1963, and 1980

1. *Law No. 161 of 27 September 1958*
   300 hectares of rainfed land or 80 hectares of irrigated land or land covered with trees, with the right to transfer another 10 hectares of irrigated or 40 hectares of rainfed land to each child or wife up to a total of 40 irrigated or 160 nonirrigated hectares.
2. *Legislative Decree No. 88 of 23 June 1963,* With the Changes Made in *Legislative Decree No. 31 of 14 May 1980* Shown in Parentheses.
   a. *Irrigated Land: 15 to 55 hectares* (15 to 45 hectares)
   15 hectares in the Ghūṭah oasis; 20 hectares in the coastal region; 25 hectares in the plain of al-Baṭīḥah; 40 (30) hectares in other lands watered by flow; 50 (40) hectares of land irrigated by waterlifts of any kind in the valleys of the Euphrates, Tigris, and Khābūr; 55 (45) hectares in lands supplied with water from wells in the provinces of al-Ḥasakah, Dayr az-Zūr, and ar-Raqqah; and 45 (35) hectares in other lands irrigated by waterlifts.
   b. *Rainfed Land Covered with Trees: 35 to 50 hectares* (30 to 45 hectares)
   Between 35 and 45 (30 and 40) hectares in the provinces of Latakia (and Ṭarṭūs) and from 40 to 50 (35 to 45) hectares in the other provinces depending on the age and the wide or narrow spacing of the trees.
   c. *Rainfed Land: 80 to 300 hectares* (55 to 200 hectares)
   80 (55) hectares in regions with a mean annual rainfall exceeding 500 mm.; 120 (85) hectares in regions getting between 350 and 500 mm.; 200 (140) hectares in regions with a precipitation of lower than 350mm.; and 300 (200) hectares in the provinces of al-Ḥasakah, Dayr az-Zūr, and ar-Raqqah. (The owner or his heirs could retain the maximum allowable hectares if, subsequent to the application of the [1980] decree, he would plant his rainfed land with trees or water it from a well but not if he converted it into irrigated land by using rivers or benefiting from state irrigation projects.)
   d. Each wife or child is allowed up to 8 percent of the area permissible to the head of the family.

TABLE 2–5
Disposal of Lands Expropriated under the Agrarian Reform Laws up to 1975 (in thousand hectares)

Category	*Uncultivated*	*Irrigated and Planted with Trees*	*Rainfed*	*Total*	*%*
Lands allocated to cooperatives or various ministries	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	254.0	18.1
Lands distributed to peasants		60.7	405.4	466.1	33.3
Excluded and sold lands		6.3	323.5	329.8	23.5
Nondistributed lands	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	351.4	25.1
Total areas of expropriated land	185.5	68.0	1147.8	1401.3	100.0

Sources: Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1984*, p. 132; and *1994*, p. 109

TABLE 2–6
Additional Elements of the Impact of the Agrarian Reform as Reflected in the Only Official Data Publicly Available up to the end of 1995 (areas in thousands hectares)

Province	*Number of Landholders Affected by 1958 Agrarian Reform*	*Total Area of Their Holdings*	*Number of Additional Landholders Affected by the 1963 Reform Decree*	*Total Area of Their Holdings*
Aleppo Idlib	{ 608	{ 420		
Ḥimṣ	201	214		
Ḥamāh	261	218		
Latakia Ṭarṭūs	{ 51	{ 24		
Dayr az-Zur ar-Raqqah	{ 881	{ 619		
al-Ḥasakah	1062	698		
as-Suwaydā’	11	38		
Dar’a	27	50		
Damascus al-Qnayṭrah	{ 145	{ 109		
Total	3247	2390	1,372	48.7

Sources: The figures for landholders affected by the 1958 Agrarian Reform Law are based on data in Munīr ash-Sharīf, *Qaḍiyyat-ul-Arḍ fī Sūriyyah* (Damascus, 1961) p. 107. The other figures are taken from Syria, Office Arabe de Presse et de Documentation, ed., *Etude documentaire sur l’agriculture syrienne* (Damascus, February 1970), p. 33; and Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Burearu of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1971*, p. 133; *1976*, p. 219; *1984*, p. 132; and *1994*, p. 109.

ants, excluded and sold 23.5 percent, and allocated 18.1 percent to cooperatives and various government ministries. The rest remained undistributed, and much of it was apparently leased out. The state has not provided any additional relevant data subsequently, despite the further reduction of the maximum limit of individually owned landholdings decreed in 1980.[115]

Even though the number of landholders increased from an estimated 292,273 in 1958 to 468,539 in 1970–1971, that is, by more than 60 percent, the emerging tenurial system continued to reveal glaring inequalities. As is evident from Table 2–1, owners of fewer than ten hectares, other than those with mixed holdings, formed 75.4 percent of all landowners in 1970–1971 but had title to only 23.5 percent of the total area of private fully owned agricultural land. Land under lease was even more unevenly distributed: 1.9 percent of all leaseholders controlled 35.3 percent of all land held by lease.

Since Syria's retreat from radicalism in 1970 there has been a reversal of some of the trends generated by the agrarian reforms, partly as a result of further migrations of people from the countryside. Over the decade ending in

TABLE 2–6 (Continued)

Cultivated Areas Actually Expropriated up to 1975[a]			*Total Area of Cultivated Lands in 1975*[c]	*Expropriated Land as % of Total Cultivated Lands*	*Number of Agrarian Reform Benefiting Families as of End of 1969*	*Areas of Cultivated Lands Distributed to Them*	
Rainfed	*Irrigated and Planted with Trees*	*Total*				*Rainfed*	*Irrigated and Planted with Trees*
231.8	6.5	238.3	1233	19.3	10,848	136.7	5.6
61.2	3.9	65.1	341	19.1	6,968	49.4	3.9
88.3	6.4	94.7	377	25.1	5,071	54.8	5.0
89.5	2.7	92.2	485	19.0	7,486	78.1	2.2
2.3	3.0	5.3	96	5.5	3,238	1.9	2.7
6.6	2.5	9.1	130	7.0	3,381	5.1	2.3
7.9	9.8	17.7	127	13.9	3,262		9.3
131.2	16.8	148.0	741	20.0	5,618	33.4	14.2
454.0	9.4	463.4	1344	34.5	1,481	2.9	9.2
3.1		3.1	176	1.8			
8.3	0.3	8.6	253	3.4	5,151	20.2	5.7
55.7	6.3	62.0	160	38.7			
7.9[b]	0.4[b]	8.3[b]	13[b]	63.8[b]			
1147.8	68.0	1215.8	5476	22.0	52,504	382.5	60.1

[a]The expropriated areas added up to 185,500 hectares.
[b]This apparently refers only to the part of the Golan that was under Syrian control in 1975.
[c]The area comprises lands under crops and fallow lands.

1981, the number of landholders decreased by 5.3 percent (see Table 2–7). There is little doubt that the absolute numerical diminution was essentially in the ranks of the small-scale peasant proprietors, that is, among the peasants owning under ten hectares. Their holdings were often so small—in 1970–1971, out of the 292,983 peasants belonging to this class no fewer than 23.6 percent owned less than one hectare and another 19.5 percent less than two hectares[116] —that in many cases, particularly in years of drought or bad harvests, they were unable to make a reasonable profit or even recover their necessary expenses, and had to lease their plots to the larger farmers or mustathmirs and break their connection with the soil. This gave rise to the curious phenomenon of the absentee peasant-landowner. Some of the small farmers appear also to have parted with their plots, succumbing to the temptation of higher land prices in the neighborhood of cities.

In the same decade the number of landless (but not necessarily of landed) owners of agricultural machines also slightly declined, even though ownership of such machines had not been very widespread: in 1970–1971 only 50,759 individuals owned agricultural machines (mostly irrigation pumps), whereas 468,539 held land.[117] By contrast, between 1970 and 1981 the number of tractors used in the private agricultural sector rose from 8,642 to 19,511 and the number of harvesters, threshers, and combines from 1,339 to 2,319.[118] This explains why the number of "holders of animals only" decreased by as much as 24.5 percent in that decade. The extent of the advance of mechanization in subsequent years may be gathered from the fact that by 1993 no fewer than 72,782 tractors and 4,798 harvesters, threshers, and combines were in use in the private, public, and cooperative agricultural sectors.[119] It is not clear what proportion of these machines belonged to each sector, but there is little doubt that the private sector had the lion's share.[120]

In any case, after 1970 the fortunes of the capitalized middle-size and larger farmers and mustathmirs waxed, even as the position of the small-scale landholding peasants became less secure. As is evident from Table 2–3, agricultural "employers" increased from 25,850 in 1972 to 49,690 in 1984, and 137,004 in 1989, but dropped slightly to 131,282 in 1991. The reasons are fairly clear. By

TABLE 2–7
Syria's Agricultural Holders in 1970–1971 and 1981

	1970–1971	*1981*	*% Decrease*
Holders whose holdings include land	468,539	443,848	5.3
Holders of animal only	52,950	39,991	24.5
Holders of agricultural machines only	629	618	1.7
Holders of animals and agricultural machines only	995	943	5.2

Sources: Syria, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, *1970–71 Agricultural Census, First Stage—Basic Data*, pp. 14, 101, 106, and 114; and Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1986*, p. 139.

dint of their possession of money, agricultural capitalists were before 1958 and have been since 1970 more able than any other class to make efficient use of artificial manures and modern machinery, extract from their land greater produce with less labor and at a smaller cost, and reap the benefits of diversified production or intensive raising of industrial crops and luxury foods. Savings piled up from earnings by family members in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region enabled them to lay out fresh capital in agriculture and grow more fruit and vegetables, which yield a profit higher than could be obtained by the same money in other investments, in view of the exemption of these crops from price controls, the untaxability of farming income, and the general preference given by the government to the interests of agriculture.

Thus the mustathmirs and the middling and rich landed peasants have improved their holdings, or purchased more machines, or turned to advantage the absence of any de facto limit on leaseholdings,[121] and by this means gained control of small peasant plots that they have thrown together and exploited along capitalist lines. Initially slipping from the grasp of the state, they enhanced their own function despite the originally adversary spirit of Baʿthist legislation. Their increasing weight after 1970, however, accords with the interests of powerful elements in the state apparatus who have benefited from their operations and connived at their leasing of plots owned by the state or by tribal chieftains, or by the poorer peasantry.

At present agricultural landownership appears to be less socially valuable than the ability to bring capital or new technology to bear upon cultivation.

CHAPTER 3

Living Conditions

The Distribution of Agricultural Income prior to and since the Restructuring of Agrarian Relations

Prior to the triumph in Syria of advanced ideas on the peasant question—a consequence, at bottom, of the coming to the political forefront of military elements of peasant origin—and the restructuring in the 1950s and 1960s of landed property and agrarian relations, the great body of the tillers of the soil earned little more than a bare subsistence. Scarcely one-third of them cultivated their own patches of ground or tended their small fruit gardens, or had merely a right to a share in the periodic distribution of little strips under the old system of mushāʿ or communal ownership that was still in use in the central plains, though increasingly giving way to a more stabilized and individualist tenure. The greater number of other peasants were sharecroppers and legally tenants at will, their occupancy being terminable at the pleasure of the landlord who, however, rarely broke with the custom of the hereditary succession of tenants. Except in areas in the neighborhood of cities earmarked for market gardening, as in the Ghūṭah, the letting of arable land for a cash rent was unusual, but became more important after World War II. The remaining cultivators labored for hire and, by and large, had "neither a peg in the earth nor a star in the heavens" (*lā b-il-qāʿ widd wa lā bis-samā najmah*), as the peasants of the Euphrates would say to describe the poorest in their ranks.

It is perhaps indicative of the common origin of some of the Near Eastern and European agricultural institutions that the type of the tenancy most prevalent in Syria during the first half of this century and in earlier times was, in its basic features, similar to the customary arrangements that were in effect in certain parts of Europe in the days of Adam Smith. In his classic work, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), he refers to a species of farmers who had "gradually succeeded" to the slave cultivators of antiquity and who were called in Latin *coloni partiarii*. In the eighteenth century they were no longer to be found in England but subsisted in some regions of Scotland, where they were known as steel-bow tenants,[1] and constituted a considerable part of the peasantry in France, where they had the appellation of *métayers*. The proprietor provided them with the stock and seed and took half of the produce, after setting aside what was needed for maintaining the stock.[2] However, according to Marc Bloch, the *métayage* was against a half, a third, or a quarter of the produce, depending apparently on the contribution of either side.[3]

In Syria the system analogous to this form of tenancy was called *muzāraʿah* and the tenant or share-cropper *muzāriʿ*. Its roots probably go back to the distant

past: article 46 of the Law Code of Hammurabi of Babylon, which dates from the eighteenth century B.C. refers to owners letting their fields to tenants for one-half or one-third of the crop.[4] The modalities of the muzāraʿah differed from region to region and sometimes from village to village in the same part of the country. Diverse factors entered into the determination of the tenant's share of the harvest, such as his relative input, local usage, the method of cultivation, and the care or skill that the crop required.

During the first half of this century in the northern province of Aleppo (which included the present province of Idlib) the equal division of the produce between the proprietor and the tenant was characteristic of the cereal areas that had ancient peasant traditions, notably the western plateau. The proprietor supplied the land and the seed and the tenant his labor and draft animals. In the poorer areas of the same province, as in the steppe, the peasant furnished only his physical strength and received as little as one-fourth of the proceeds of his labor, and was known on that account as a *murābiʿ*. In years of bad harvest he was reduced to privation and distress.[5]

In southern Syria, in the Ḥawrān, the share of the tenant grain grower was one-fourth of the crop on the eve of the agrarian reform,[6] but had been one-third in the nineteenth century.[7] In the Druze Mountain the portion of the sharecropper was one-fourth all along,[8] but he received in addition an annual supply of food amounting to 20 mudds or 400 kilograms of wheat.[9] Because of the Druze's strong sense of obligation to their coreligionists, the Druze peasant never died of hunger: in years of local shortage, the village maḍyafah (guest room) was thrown open to him. By contrast, when the Ḥawrāni peasant fell on hard times, he was left to fend for himself.[10]

In the Ghūṭah the tenant was generally better off, and sometimes received as much as two-thirds of the yield because irrigation and the tending of fruit trees required more effort and greater skill.[11] On the estates of some of the bigger landlords, however, the tenant received only one-third of the yield.[12]

In the Ḥimṣ region practices differed from village to village. For example, in one village that had two-thirds of its lands in the irrigated zone and the other third in the rainfed zone, the tenants bore all expenses and gave the proprietor one-fourth of the crop. In another village that lay entirely in the irrigated zone, the proprietor and tenants shared the expenses and the harvest in a proportion of half-and-half.[13] This latter practice was known as the *sharākah* Ḥamawiyyah—the Ḥamāh partnership—apparently because it originated or was current in the irrigated areas of the Ḥamāh region.[14]

In the district (now province) of ar-Raqqah in the lands bordering the Euphrates, which witnessed an expansion in the cultivation of cotton in the late 1940s, the owner of the land took between 20 and 25 percent of the produce, although his share was shown as 17 percent in the written contract. The peasant received 30 percent, and the mustathmir or capitalist, who sometimes merely contributed an irrigation pump, appropriated the rest of the crop, notwithstanding the fact that the cost of irrigation did not, as a rule, exceed 10 percent of the value of the produce.[15]

It is difficult to determine the real degree of the poverty or well-being of the sharecroppers or the small peasant landowners during the first half of this century. Their income varied greatly not only from place to place but with the fortunes of the agricultural year. Farm output was—and remains to a large degree—hostage to unpredictable rainfall conditions and recurring sharp ups and downs.

A rough calculation made by a land surveyor in 1906 suggested that the poorest (Christian) peasant in the region of Qalʿat-il-Ḥuṣn earned the equivalent of 7 to 11 pounds sterling a year.[16] According to another estimate made shortly before World War I, the money value of the average yearly income of the ʿAlawī peasant families in the district of Jablah was, in most instances, as low as 5 and, for the better off, no higher than 10 Turkish gold liras, that is, it ranged between 4-1/2 and 9 pounds sterling.[17] But the ʿAlawī peasants were in a special category: their lot was never enviable. Under the Ottomans, prior to the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, they were abused and reviled and, on occasions (in earlier centuries) their women and children led into captivity and disposed of by sale.[18] After World War I the economic conditions even of the more independent and less downtrodden ʿAlawī peasants became so deplorable that they developed the practice of selling or hiring out their daughters to affluent townspeople. Some were sold in their childhood for life as servants but most were, for an agreed price, merely indentured, so to say, for a given period of time.[19]

The discrepancies of income between the various agricultural classes were wide. In the decade before World War I, in years of very good harvest the annual income of the middling headman of the Druze village of Ṣalkhad from his land was about 1,000 Napoleons or 875 Turkish gold liras, or nearly 795.5 pounds sterling, that of the richest member of the leading landed Druze family—the Ṭurshān—about 5,000 Napoleons or 4,350 Turkish gold liras. The ʿAzm family, which stood at the apex of Ḥamāh's aristocracy, had an estimated yearly income from its villages of about 6,000 pounds sterling or 6,600 Turkish gold liras.[20] The wealthiest landowner of Damascus, ʿAbd-ur-Raḥmān al-Yūsuf, who held the whole east shore of Lake Tiberias known as al-Batīḥah and three villages in the Ghūṭah, five in al-Marj, and twenty-four in the Golan, had an annual income that varied from 7,000 to 10,000 Turkish gold liras, depending on the chances of the agricultural year.[21]

On the estates of ʿAbd-ur-Raḥmān al-Yūsuf, the general agent (*al-wakīl al-ʿām*), who had overall responsibility, received in addition to supplies of food from the villages about 10 gold liras monthly. The bookkeeper (*al-kātib*),[22] who was, as a rule, a Jew or a Christian and was chosen as much for his ability to keep secrets as for his arithmetical skills, earned about 5 gold liras a month with food. The agent (*al-wakīl*), who had charge in individual villages, derived half of his income in kind from the produce of a shikārah, a special piece of land that was set aside for him. The other half amounted to 3 gold liras a month. The Shaykh al-karrāyyah,[23] who supervised the distribution of water and the clearing of canals, received an annual compensation of 1.5 gold liras over

and above his share in kind of the harvest which, like that of the irrigators (*saqqāyah*) and the other husbandmen, was one-fourth or one-third or 40 percent, depending on the location of the village. The remuneration of the guarders of the crop (*waqqāfah*)—who, incidentally, were never drawn from the peasantry but were armed Kurds or Circassians or bedouins from the Ruwala tribe—varied from season to season.[24]

A quarter of a century or so later, a rudimentary estimate for 1936 put the worth of the average yearly income of a sharecropping peasant family at 20 Turkish gold liras and that for a petty landowning peasant family at 30 Turkish gold liras. This meant, in effect, an average per capita income of 3.33 gold liras for sharecropping tenants and 5 gold liras for small propertied peasants, since peasant families consisted on the average of six members.[25] The Turkish gold lira, which is still in circulation, was quoted in 1936 at about 5.5 Syrian pounds[26] and exchanged for £1 6s. 6d. or $6.59.[27] In other words, if the estimate corresponded closely to the facts, the average per capita yearly income for tenants in 1936 was about 18.32 Syrian pounds or $21.94, and for small landowning peasants 27.50 Syrian pounds or $32.95. These low incomes mirrored in part the effect of the Great Depression which lasted, with differing severity, until 1939.

A more detailed estimate covering the ʿAlawī village of Sharqliyyah, which lies in the Waʿr plateau in the province of Ḥimṣ, put the average net revenue of a sharecropping family in 1949 for agricultural work carried out between the middle of September and the middle of May at 1 shumbul or 216 kilograms of wheat, 5 shumbuls or 840 kilograms of barley, and 2.25 shumbuls or 420 kilograms of sorghum or a total of 1,476 kilograms of grain for a family, which seldom consisted of fewer than six members.[28] This income was scarcely enough for an adequate level of consumption of food and other necessaries of life which, in the case of a village in the district of Damascus outside the Ghūṭah during the second half of the 1940s, was reckoned to be for each individual peasant, every month, 25 kilograms of wheat (or a lesser quantity of barley and sorghum in the instance of the very poor) and 1 kilogram of meat (a rare luxury for ʿAlawī cultivators), and, every year, 40 kilograms of olive oil, 20 kilograms of cooking butter (*samn*), and 4 tins of kerosene, not to mention the indispensable cotton headdress (*kūfiyyah*), woollen cloaklike wrap (*ʿabāʾah*), and a pair of linen shirts once in a while.[29]

The insufficiency of the share of the Sharqliyyah tenant forced him to seek work as a reaper in the month of May in the plains to the east of his village. This enabled him to add about 70 Syrian pounds to his income, apparently, because labor wages rise sharply at harvest time.[30] Since wheat was selling wholesale, on the average, at 27 Syrian piastres the kilogram in 1949 and barley at 16,[31] and his portion of sorghum may be reasonably assumed to have been worth about 100 Syrian pounds, the money value of his total income in 1949 must have been nearly 363 Syrian pounds or, nominally, more than three times the estimated average annual revenue of a sharecropper in 1936. But, in the interval, there had been more than a fivefold increase in the cost of living, and the exchange value of the Turkish gold lira had shot up from 5.50 to 33.26

Syrian pounds.[32] It must be kept in mind that large segments of agriculture were—and still are—noncommercial, and that the rise in food prices affected agricultural wage laborers more than sharecroppers, who consumed the commodities that they themselves produced, and in fact benefited the agriculturalists with marketable surpluses. The shortage and high price of kerosene during the 1940s, however, had an effect on many peasants who used it as lamp oil.

An inquiry instituted in 1959, during the first stage of the application of agrarian reform measures, revealed that the annual earnings of 8,417 families composed of five to six members and living in 84 villages situated in various agricultural zones ranged between 40 and 115 Syrian pounds per capita.[33] But the year 1959 and the year that preceded it were years of severe drought in which agricultural income plummeted, respectively, to 62 and 75 percent of the level of 1957, a year of good harvest.[34]

Statistical effort in a particular direction or the absence of it sometimes reflects the social bias or political interests of a given regime. In this connection it is perhaps significant that whereas in the second half of the 1960s the radical wing of the Baʿthists attempted to determine the distribution of agricultural income by factor shares—a very complicated task, particularly in view of the difficulty of separating these shares in the case of the great body of peasants who till their own land—the attempt was not pursued under the present wing of the party. Nor have any effectual steps been taken for the systematic gathering of reliable figures on the more meaningful distribution of agricultural income between the small landed peasants, the middle husbandmen, the rich farmers and mustathmirs, and the landless agricultural laborers. The government, the party, and the Peasants' Federation have all neglected this important aspect of the economics of agriculture.

It is possible from the existing official figures, however, to form a rough idea of the relative economic position of agricultural people. The available basic data from which inferences bearing upon this matter can be drawn do not pertain to national income but to the net domestic product at factor cost, which is the nearest thing to national income but differs from it because it assumably omits net factor income accruing from abroad.[35] The latest relevant estimates for selected years between 1963 and 1992, which partly reflect revisions to earlier defective series and may still not be free from error, are shown in Table 3–1 and may be construed to indicate a number of trends.

First, when year-to-year changes are kept in view, the income of agricultural people has clearly been prone to sharp ups and downs. This flows essentially from the vagaries of the weather and the recurrence of crop failure. No other danger is of comparable significance for cultivators. As the government protects them against the fluctuations of the international prices of major commodities, drought is now the fundamental source of their economic insecurity and of the anguish and privations that intermittently mar their life. Peasants with small holdings are the most vulnerable to its effects. It may in its severest incidences deprive them of their assets and livelihood.

In the second place, it appears that in 1992 domestic income, that is, national

TABLE 3–1
Syria's Net Domestic Product (N.D.P.) at Factor Cost and the Share of the Agricultural Sector in Million Syrian Pounds at Constant 1985 Prices in Selected Years between 1963 and 1995

Year	*N.D.P. at Factor Cost*	*Share of Agricultural Sector*	*% Share of Agricultural Sector*
1963	20,180	7,676	38.0
1970	24,334	6,201	25.5
1975	49,334	11,352	23.0
1980	72,165	17,478	24.2
1985	81,413	16,985	20.9
1986	77,484	18,042	23.3
1987	75,680	15,602	20.6
1988	85,251	20,631	24.2
1989	76,700	14,306	18.6
1990	83,355	17,336	20.8
1991	87,963	18,457	21.0
1992	96,057	21,964	22.9
1993	102,175	22,812	22.3
1994	109,940	24,887	22.6
1995[a]	112,555	25,360	22.5

Source: Based on figures in Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1994*, pp. 490–91; *1996*, p. 523.

[a]Provisional.

income less net factor income accruing from abroad, was in *real terms* more than fourfold higher than in 1963 but agricultural income less than threefold higher. Agriculture's share of the domestic income also dropped from 38 percent in 1963 to 22.6 percent in 1994.

It does not necessarily follow that, relative to other incomes, agricultural income was sliding downward in per capita terms. This is because there were fairly large declines in the cultivating population in many years between 1976 and 1989 (consult Table 1–3).

Unfortunately, there are no precise figures on how agricultural income is distributed between the various agricultural classes. The Baʿthists of the 1960s sought to moderate the unevenness in the income distribution by breaking down some of the institutional inequalities that characterized the countryside and narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor. But disparities in income undoubtedly persisted and increased after 1970 in the wake of the retreat from radicalism and the further opening up of the economy and relative loosening of state controls in the second half of the 1980s. Families different from those of the 1950s now stand at the top of the social ladder in the countryside, of course, and many others occupy the middle rungs who previously had been eking out a living at the bottom.

In a study on the patterns of income distribution in Syria covering the period

1963–1975, an economist associated with the Arab Planning Institute of Kuwait made an attempt to isolate from the total agricultural income the portion or "surplus" that went to ownership of land or capital as well as to organization and management, and the portion that went to the producers. It is not clear from his text how the size of these portions was estimated, and the estimate is based on an earlier official income series that has since been revised. The assumptions underlying this series are also not made explicit, nor are distinctions drawn between the self-employed small landowners and the agricultural employers, or between the producers that are wage earners and the unpaid producers working on family farms. At any rate, his estimates indicated that the producers' share of the total agricultural income, which varied from year to year, was 7.9 percent in 1963, 12.8 percent in 1970, and only 5.1 percent in 1975, and that on the whole the producers appear to have fared better between 1966 and 1971 than in the other years of the period under study.[36] This may be related to the presence in power between 1966 and 1970 of the radical wing of the Baʿth party and the initiation in 1972 of the policy of economic liberalization by the regime of Ḥāfiz al-Asad.

The figures in Table 3–2 relating to the average for all provinces of the daily minimum wages for both permanent and seasonal agricultural workers point to a decline in their real earnings between 1972 and 1980. Between 1980 and 1990, however, their income appears, except in years of drought, to have taken an upward turn and to have risen at a pace higher than the rate of inflation. The remuneration of field labor varied, to be sure, from one province to another. For example, in 1990 the daily minimum wage of a seasonal reaper was only 20 Syrian pounds in the provinces of Ḥimṣ and Dayr-is-Zūr, 45 pounds in those of Damascus and Aleppo, 70 pounds in the province of Latakia, and as high as 80 pounds in that of as-Suwaydāʾ.[37]

There were also income differentials between the sexes. From inquiries conducted in the countryside by this writer in the summer of 1985, it appears that on modern capitalized farms in the province of Aleppo the actual daily wages for seasonal laborers in that year—when the average daily minimum was 25 Syrian pounds—ranged between 20 pounds for 6.5 to 7 hours of work in the case of women and 60 to 65 pounds for 8 to 9 hours of work in the case of men; but for laborers employed the whole year round—for whom the average minimum was 24 pounds—the actual daily wage was 15 Syrian pounds for women and 50 Syrian pounds for men. In some of the villages of the Aleppo region, however, male workers were paid only 25 pounds daily and a great proportion of women were still being rewarded in the old traditional manner: day by day one full saṭl or bucket of the proceeds of their labor.[38] The rationale advanced for the women's lower rewards was the lighter work allotted to them.

The marked rise in the wage rates of the agricultural workers between 1980 and 1990 was in some degree related to the increase in the cost of living, but in greater measure was due to the growing scarcity of field labor in that decade, which is obviously explicable by the exodus of people—especially adult males—from the countryside. The stimulus to the upward movement of agri-

TABLE 3-2
The Average for All Provinces of the Daily Minimum Wage for Adult Agricultural Workers According to Category of Workers and Selected Agricultural Activities in Selected Years (in Syrian pounds)

Category of Worker or Form of Activity	*1972*	*1980*	*1990*	*Average Annual Rate of Inflation 1970–1980*	*Average Annual Inflation 1980–1991*
Permanent workers					
Agent of landowner	5.54	9.02	34.70		
Worker on an annual wage	3.68	6.36	33.04		
Worker on a monthly wage	4.30	6.39	35.13		
Seasonal workers					
Planting and seeding	4.23	6.63	36.35		
Irrigation	4.67	6.90	37.45		
Harvesting	6.54	9.82	46.00		
Cotton picking	3.98	6.41	37.55		
Plucking of fruits or vegetables	4.38	6.20	38.04		
Average annual rate of inflation 1970–1980				11.4	
Average annual inflation (GDP deflator) 1980–1991					14.4

Sources: The figures for 1990 were obtained by this writer in 1992 from Syria's Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. For the figures of the other years, see its *Annual Statistical Bulletin, 1972*, p. 112, and *1980*, p. 128. The figures on Syria's rates of inflation are taken from the World Bank, *World Development Report*, *1982*, p. 111, and *1993*, p. 262.

cultural wage rates may be weakened by the "reverse migration" since the early 1990s from the cities and towns to the villages.[39]

The relatively high price of labor in the 1980s and up to at least 1991 has most affected those small or middle farmers whose crop raising is as yet unmechanized, such as Syria's lentil growers. Hand labor is involved at almost every step in the cultivation of lentils—the iron- and protein-rich "poor man's meat": in the spreading of seeds, the ridging up of the soil, the pulling of the ripe lentils, the heaping up of the crop for drying, and the passing of the lentils through sieves. Only threshing is done by tractor or by the ancient mule-drawn jarjar, a kind of wooden drag with sharp edge wheels.[40] The wages for hand-pulling constituted by themselves 38.7 percent in 1983 and 42.8 percent in 1991 of the total cost of producing nonirrigated red lentils.[41] This follows from the more or less simultaneous ripening of all lentils and the necessity of harvesting

them at about the same time, which abruptly pushes up wage rates to a peak point. For the irrigated white lentils the corresponding wages, while high, formed a markedly lower percentage of their total production cost.

But, as a class, how have the small farmers—in rough terms, the owners or leaseholders of not more than 10 hectares or in areas of low rainfall, 20 hectares—been getting on?

As is clear from Table 2–3, the "self-employed" Syrians active in agriculture and animal husbandry, a category that embraces the greater number of small peasant proprietors, decreased from 364,656 in 1972 to 283,264 in 1991, that is, by 22.3 percent, assuming the accuracy of the official figures. As both years were good years for agriculture, how is the decrease explicable? It is almost certain that some of the "self-employed" became "employers," who increased from 25,850 in 1972 to 131,282 in 1991, that is, more than fourfold. But many of them were undoubtedly unable to cling to their holdings or, in some instances, parted with them, lured by the surge in land prices. This is suggested by the 5.3 percent decrease in the number of landholders between 1970/71 and 1981 that the agricultural censuses taken in those years revealed (see Table 2–7). By and large, however, the other small farmers, including the agrarian reform beneficiaries, now eat better and enjoy more of the amenities of life than in the pre-1958 period, despite the precariousness of their economic position flowing from the small size of their plots or the whims of the climate and the year-by-year variations in their harvest.

The explanation for their progress lies partly in the fact that in many, if not most, cases they and their families do not live exclusively from agriculture but derive part of their income from off-farm jobs. Younger male members, in particular, while assisting in the cultivation of the soil or the gathering in of the crops, hire themselves out as mechanics or house painters or guardsmen in commercial establishments or in other capacities in nearby towns, or as metal workers or tractor drivers or repair men in their own or neighboring villages. One peasant who this writer met in 1985 owned two rainfed hectares near Aleppo, but to supplement his farm income hawked textile fabrics during part of the year in the streets of Dayr-iz-Zūr, 320 kilometers away, leaving his farm in the care of his wife and six children.

The marked preference that the government continues to give to the interests of the agricultural classes has also helped to keep many of the small farmers on their feet. This preference is reflected in the official procurement prices for the major crops, which are, from both political and economic standpoints, highly significant because of their direct bearing on the earnings of the peasantry and the distribution of income between the cities and the countryside. How these prices are determined may be gathered from Table 3–3, which suggests that the government takes pains to assure the landed farmers an adequate return for their labor and investments and, at the same time, to foster production along lines congruent with the crop pattern and objectives set forth in the state production plan.

The prices are set every year on the basis of estimates by the Ministry of Agriculture of the average expense of every agricultural operation and of the materials used for every important crop, and in particular the crops on which the state has the marketing monopoly, namely, wheat, barley, lentils, cotton, tobacco, and sugar beet. The expense of transporting the produce to the state collecting point is also taken into account. The estimates do not appear to deviate from the real costs of production, and since they include interest on capital and charges for rent, the official procurement prices involve a net subsidy to farmers who are not leaseholders or who have not received advances of money. Most of the materials—the seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides—are provided by the state at concessionary terms, and in some years—as in 1985—the farmers received sacks from the state collecting organs free of charge.

As is reflected in Tables 3–3 and 3–4, the profit margins allowed by the government varied from year to year and from crop to crop. They were also made known before the beginning of the planting season. When the government sought to foster the production of a particular crop in a particular year or period, it markedly pushed up its procurement price. It will not escape notice that in 1990 the profit margins for most of the principal crops were unusually high, as high as 81.2 percent for durum wheat, 79 percent for soft wheat, 45.7 percent for cotton, and 45.1 percent for barley, a trend that began in 1988 and mirrored the government's desire to encourage the peasants to increase the cultivation of "strategic crops," as the Peasants' General Union put it.[42]

By dint of the system of official procurement prices, the small farmers are no longer subject to the internal seasonal fluctuations of grain prices that characterized the preagrarian reform period. Formerly, after the gathering in of the crops, the poorer farmers were eager to sell in order to obtain cash for the defrayal of debts they incurred at seed time and harvest, which afforded the opportunity to warehouse keepers—the khanjis of Aleppo, the bawaykiyyas of Damascus, and the like in other towns—to buy grain at a cheap price and hold it in the expectation of considerable profit from a rise in its market value later in the year when stocks became low.

It must be kept in mind, however, that eggs, meat, poultry, and most fruits and vegetables continue to be marketed through middlemen, who in some cases make large, if not excessive, gains. Moreover, by dint of the inadequacy of cold-storage facilities, the growers of such products are under certain circumstances detrimentally affected by the laxity or slow tempo of elements of the state bureaucracy. For example, in 1985 the crop of deciduous fruits (pears, peaches, apples, plums, and the like) was too abundant to be marketed locally. The failure of the bureaucracy to issue in time the needed permits for the export of the surplus led to a sharp reduction in prices and ultimately to heavy losses for the farmers.

There are no official figures on the level of income of the small farmers. Of this only a rough indication can be given on the basis of inquiries by this writer in 1990 and 1992 in various villages in different parts of Syria.

TABLE 3–3
Officially Estimated Average Production Expenses, Average Yield, and Official Prices of Selected Principal Crops in 1983 and 1991

	High Yield Irrigated Wheat		*Non-Irrigated Durum Wheat*		*Irrigated Cotton*		*Sugar Beet*		*Barley*	
	1983	*1991*	*1983*	*1990*[a]	*1983*	*1991*	*1983*	*1991*	*1983*	*1991*
A. Average production expenses (per hectare in Syrian pounds)										
1. Agricultural operations										
Ploughing or tilling	294	1350	221	750	410	1500	410	1350	220	750
Taskīb[b]	206	465			250	608	250	800		
Seeding	162	220	118	160	413	475	605	478	44	220
Fertilizing	88	260	22	140	88	430	208	704		60
Irrigating	252	1260			770	2700	770	2475		
Hoeing and weeding					881	4560	1375	2500		
Pest control	44	122		90	88	720	88	680		
Harvesting, picking or plucking	417	1820	132	516	1250	5650	1014	3060	96	448
Threshing and winnowing						238		1570		
Transportation of produce	195	445	58	122	274	619	1504	6855	66	111
Total of 1	1658	5942	551	1778	4424	17500	6224	20472	426	1589

2. Production requirements										
Organic fertilizers							666	3000		
Chemical fertilizers	682	2795	106	896	683	3350	789	7636		561
Sacks or packages	165	775	47	240	190	1239			50	185
Seeds	180	2304	180	960	100	666	375	1300	110	1188
Value of Irrigation water	504	2070			1370	4200	1360	4200		
Pesticides	40	415		175	170	2645	180	4030		
Total of 2	1571	8359	333	2271	2513	12100	3370	20166	160	1934
3. Rent of land: 15% of produce	625	2730	198	774	1444	5715	1860	7875	120	672
4. Interest (cost of credit): 5% in 1983 and 4.5% in 1990–1991	122	562	32	159	174	1335	353	1830	12	138
5. Incidental expenses: 5%	192	624	54	179	419	1480	573	2032	35	154
Total expenses (per hectare in Syrian pounds)	4168	18217	1168	5161	8974	38130	12380	52375	753	4487
B. Yield in kilograms per hectare	3600	4000	1000	1100	2600	3000	40000	42000	1000	1000
C. Cost of producing 1 kilogram in Syrian piastres	115	455	117	469	345	1271	31	125	75	448
D. Official price of 1 kilogram in Syrian piastres	123	800	138	850	400	1800	33	190	82	625
E. % profit per kilogram	6.9	75.8	17.9	81.2	15.9	41.6	6.4	52.0	9.3	39.5

Sources: Figures obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, Economics Division, June 1985 and December 1992.

[a]I used the 1990 figures for durum wheat because the 1991 figures are defective.

[b]Parceling out the land for planting and irrigation purposes.

TABLE 3–4
Production Expenses, Procurement Prices, and Profit Margins for Selected Principal Crops in 1980, 1985, and 1990

	1980			*1985*			*1990*		
Crop	*Expenses*	*Price*	*% Profit*	*Expenses*	*Price*	*% Profit*	*Expenses*	*Price*	*% Profit*
Durum (hard) wheat	62	80	29.0	123	138	12.2	469	850	81.2
Soft (irrigated) wheat	61	70	14.7	117	123	5.1	419	750	79.0
Nonirrigated barley	52	57	9.6	78	100	28.2	379	550	45.1
Sugar beet	16	22	37.5	29	31	6.9	91	125	37.4
Cotton	187	225	20.3	370	400	8.1	1167	1700	45.7

Sources: For the 1980 figures, see the Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Sādis,* Economic Report (Damascus, 1986), p. 65. The 1985 and 1990 figures were obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, Economics Division, December 1992.

In the village of Tibneh in the Ḥawrān plain, some 60 kilometers south of Damascus, the land is largely under wheat, and its cultivation depends entirely upon rain. In 1992 the village's smallest peasant owned 10 dūnums or 1 hectare, and the best off 130 dūnums or 13 hectares. According to the local husbandmen, in years of drought—that is, every fourth or fifth year—the return from agriculture is literally nothing, but in good years every dūnum yields about 6 mudds or 120 kilograms. Presupposing that the land was planted only to hard wheat and that the official estimates of production expenses are accurate, this would translate into a net income in 1990—a good year—ranging from 4,572 Syrian pounds or $408 (at the official exchange rate of 11.2 Syrian pounds per U.S. dollar) for the smallest peasant to 59,436 Syrian pounds or $5,307 for the best off. But it must be kept in view that in the black market the dollar exchanged for as high as 50 Syrian pounds in that year.

In the nearby but larger village of Mḥajjeh, the yearly return of a peasant from a rainfed plot of 10 dūnums or 1 hectare was, as a very old peasant graphically expressed it, "*shululum bululum*," which is an Ottoman Turkish phrase signifying "from little to nil." The net income of such a peasant was locally estimated in 1992 as seldom exceeding 5,000 Syrian pounds ($446). He has to do off-farm work in order to subsist. As a native inhabitant put it, he "lives from *qillat-il-mawt*," literally, "from the scarcity of death." In the same village a peasant with a holding of 100 dūnums or 10 hectares was said to have a net income of about 45,000 Syrian pounds ($4,018).

In Siano, a village in the ʿAlawī country, 6 kilometers to the east of Jableh, the net income in 1991 of small peasants with holdings of 15 to 20 irrigated dūnums or 1.5 to 2 hectares and planted largely to wheat, olives, and tobacco ranged from 40,000 to 50,000 Syrian pounds or $3,571 to $4,464.

Around Dūmā, now a very large town in the Ghūṭah or oasis of Damascus lying 10.5 kilometers or so northeast of the capital and with a population mainly engaged in market gardening, the smallest peasant, whose two dūnums or 0.2 hectares are irrigated from a well and from one of the canals of the oasis, had in 1990 a net income of 10,000 to 12,000 Syrian pounds or $893 to $1,071. In the same year, according to a native agricultural expert, the corresponding income of the farmer with the largest holding in the Dūmā region—the maximum allowable in the oasis is 15 hectares—could well have reached 300,000 Syrian pounds or $26,786.

But the larger farmers form, like the small peasants, a range of families existing on several different income levels. They consist essentially of three elements. One is composed of the remnants of the old Beys or their descendants. They live in the cities but thrive in some villages because they are, in the words of the local peasants, madʿūmīn—supported—from above. Another constituent of the class of richer farmers is rural and has a partly plutocratic and partly official character in the sense that its position is based partly on money and partly on its links with the government or the Baʿth party. In certain instances its influence has also a traditional significance. The third component is more clearly capitalist. It is made up of mustathmirs or investors, and especially investors in agricultural machines, who may be of rural or urban origin.

In Ibīn, a village of about 4,000 people that this writer visited in 1985 and that lies to the west of Aleppo in an area of rich farmland divided between wheat, barley, potatoes, and sugar beet, the old bey still owned 180 hectares and, according to local estimates, netted from their produce in the crop year 1983–1984 more than 36,000 Syrian pounds or $9,172 (at the then official exchange rate of 3.925 Syrian pounds per U.S. dollar), that is, the equivalent, in dollar terms, of 102,726 Syrian pounds in 1990. At the same time the old bey had little influence over the inhabitants. Social dominance belonged to a clan of about 26 families or 200 individuals who stemmed from one of the shaykhs of the well-known tribe of al-Mawālī. The clan owned the local *muḍīf*—guesthouse—and devoted the produce of 10 hectares for its upkeep. It also provided the mukhtār or headman of the village—and had done so for more than a generation—as well as the local Baʿth party representative. All its members owned good land, but property and resources were unequally distributed within the clan. The more advantaged owned larger farms and, more significantly, seven out of the fifteen tractors in the village. As a rule, small farmers cannot—except as groups or on a cooperative basis—lay by the capital needed for the purchase of even a small tractor, which in 1985 was worth 60,000 Syrian pounds or $15,287.[43] This should provide an idea of the relative economic weight of the clan's more affluent members, whose average net income in the agricultural year 1983–1984 was locally estimated at more than 50,000 Syrian pounds ($12,739). By contrast, the average earnings from agricultural pursuits of the small farmers in this village—after deducting all their costs but not the value of their own labor—came to only about 12,000 Syrian pounds ($3,057). But the lion's share of the local income went to the owner of the only combine in the village, an Aleppan textile trader, who also held twelve hectares planted to potatoes and sugar beet. He purchased the combine, which heads, threshes, and cleans the grains while moving over the fields, for 150,000 Syrian pounds ($38,217). For furnishing it to farmers, he charged 6 sacks (*shuwāls*), each containing 125 to 130 kilograms, for every 100 sacks of wheat or barley harvested. If it is assumed that the machine was put to use only in this village and that it harvested merely half of the village's grain produce, which in the year in question amounted to about 10,000 sacks of wheat and 9,000 sacks of barley, his gross income from the combine alone must have exceeded 73,000 Syrian pounds ($18,599).

In some of the more productive villages in the region of ʿAfrīn—such as Shaykh Ḥadīd, which lies 105 kilometers to the northwest of Aleppo, and the nearby Kafar Safrah—local estimates put the gross income of the richer farmers and mustathmirs in the range of 100,000 to 200,000 Syrian pounds ($25,478 to $50,955). In one village the brother of the local Baʿth party representative was said to hold 21,000 olive trees, 18,000 more than the legal limit of ownership. In a good year, the income from these trees, it was added, "would be enough to provide about fifty peasant families with their means of living."

The marked regional variations in the incomes of the richer elements involved in agriculture set limits to the scope or certainty of any inference that

may be drawn from the preceding facts. At the same time, it is beyond dispute that a moneyed class is spreading its wings in much of the Syrian countryside and that its members enter into productive relations, principally as owners of agricultural machines. Ownership of the country's tractors, combines, and irrigation pumps is predominantly private. Even the machines used in the cooperatives and reckoned in the statistics for this sector are, for the most part, owned personally by the members of the cooperatives rather than on a common basis. In fact, out of the 43,595 tractors used in cultivation in 1985, 97.7 percent were privately owned and only 1.5 percent belonged to the cooperatives and 0.8 percent to the public sector. By 1990 the total number of tractors in Syria had risen to 61,628, but the share of the cooperatives had dropped to 1.3 percent.[44]

Investment in agricultural machines is one of the profitable opportunities deliberately left open for private capital by the government in its attempt to attract the new fortunes accumulated after 1973 and during the 1980s by Syrians working in the Gulf. These fortunes and official restrictions on investments in other areas were also a factor in the surge of the prices of farmland and the sharp increase in the equity of many farmers, especially, those with lands contiguous to cities and towns. A good rainfed dūnum (1,000 square meters or one-tenth of a hectare) in the Ḥawrān plain in the vicinity of Buṣra was worth on the average one Turkish gold lira in 1918 and 50 Syrian pounds or 1.5 Turkish gold liras in the late 1940s, but could fetch as high as 50,000 Syrian pounds or 100 Turkish gold liras in 1980.[45] In the region around Qaṭana to the southwest of Damascus, a dūnum of agricultural land that brought between 300 and 600 Syrian pounds in the late 1960s, depending on the degree of its soil fertility and its access to water and an all-weather road, had a value of about 70,000 Syrian pounds in 1985. This was also the price in the same year of a dūnum of Ghūṭah's prime land that had sold for only 1,000 Syrian pounds a quarter of a century earlier.[46] A dūnum of land in the montane district of Maḍāya (on the road between Damascus and Zabadānī) suited for conversion into villas had been worth 17,000 Syrian pounds in 1975, but was selling for 400,000 Syrian pounds in 1995.

But the brisk appreciation in the value of land—at a rate far higher than that of the decrease in the purchasing power of the Syrian pound—while benefiting the landed farmers redounds to the detriment of the propertyless peasants, in the sense that it impedes their prospect of acquiring holdings of their own.

The Lessening Cost of Agricultural Credit

There are other factors affecting the income and well-being of farming people. One of the more important is the weight of the pecuniary burden they have to bear to meet their credit needs.

In the past the peasants were seldom out of the hands of the usurers. They had to rely on them for ready money in bad seasons or simply to finance the interval between the sowing of the seed and the gathering in of the crops or,

under the Ottomans, when tax farmers or troops, representing provincial governors, descended on their villages and demanded the mīrī or state dues. The rate of interest was often excessive. In the 1780s it ranged "from 12 to 15, nay frequently from 20 to 30 percent."[47] In 1860 moneylenders were exacting from peasants as much as 50 percent.[48] In 1932 the "usual" rate was about 30 percent.[49] Usury by "noninstitutional lenders" remained the scourge of the countryside down to the 1950s, its victims—the small propertied farmers and the tenants at will—paying in that decade at rates that were rarely less than 20 percent[50] and often ranged as high as 50 to 100 percent."[51]

Many merchants had usurious dealings with the peasants, which they concealed beneath specious devices. As the Qur'ān (Sūra 2.275) explicitly prohibits usury, interest was often cloaked under the guise of a forward contract that obliged the peasants to surrender part or all of their produce at specified rates, invariably below the market price, at the time of the harvest. This method, which was still in use in the 1950s, was known as *bayʿ ʿala ṭalāʿ* (literally, sale while the plants are sprouting).[52]

In Ottoman times the small peasant proprietors frequently conveyed their land to the creditor as security for the money they borrowed, by a form of conditional transfer known as *bayʿ bi-l-wafāʾ* or sale with the right of repurchase upon the discharge of the debt. If they failed to repay the loan within the agreed period, they were deprived of their property altogether. By this means large areas of land passed into the hands of moneylenders. The practice of bayʿ bi-l-wafāʾ remained in effect until 1915, when a law passed by the Young Turks put an end to it.[53] Subsequently, the debtor legally retained his interest in the land and could even sell it subject to the rights of the creditor. In the eventuality of nonpayment of the loan, the lender could not become the owner of the property but could merely put it up for auction and pay himself out of the proceeds.

For its part, the government, regardless of its identity—Ottoman, French, or Syrian—has been in practice disregarding for nearly a century the old Islamic doctrine that it was ungodly to lend money on interest. On its initiative and with the ostensible aim of liberating the farmer from usurers, the Ottoman Agricultural Bank had been set up in 1888 and was succeeded in 1918 by the State Agricultural Bank, or as later renamed, the Syrian Agricultural Bank. Both these institutions provided loans at reasonable rates: 6 percent in 1888,[54] 10 percent in 1928–1929,[55] 3 percent in 1932,[56] 4 percent between 1938 and 1942,[57] and 6 percent in 1953.[58] Initially, however, the funds advanced by these banks were swallowed up by the landed magnates, who tended to let the money out again to their own peasants at exorbitant interest. In 1938 the system was reformed and more careful control was exercised over the granting of credit. The size of loans was drastically reduced, the maximum for each borrower being cut from 5,000 to 500 Turkish gold liras and restricted to ten times the yearly tithe on the mortgaged land.[59] As the gold lira exchanged for 16.5 Syrian pounds in 1939,[60] the maximum in that year amounted to 8,250 Syrian pounds but by 1953 had been further reduced to 7,500.[61] The credit policy of the bank was now

more clearly geared to the requirements of the small and medium-sized working farmers. Nevertheless, right up to the eve of the era of agrarian reform, the bulk of the peasants would remain in the power of the usurers. Part of the explanation for this lies in their inferior credit-worthiness and the bank's insistence on good security. But the basic causal factor was the patent inadequacy of the bank's resources.

In the years antecedent to the agrarian reform there were few tenants or small peasant proprietors who were not in debt. In a region like the Ḥawrān the warehouse keepers (*bawāykiyyas*) and the merchants-usurers (*sūrāt*) of Damascus held practically all the cultivators in their meshes. The Ḥawrān was for a very long time the granary of southern Syria. Its people, who were for the most part small farmers, sold their produce in markets controlled by the merchants of the capital. Even in the towns of Ḥawrān, the shopkeepers were more often than not Damascenes. Their relationships became in essence relationships of debtors and creditors. This is in part explicable by the improvidence of the Ḥawrānis: *iṣrif mā fī-j-jayb, ya'tika mā fī-l-ghayb* (spend what is in the pocket and you will share in that which is invisible) runs one of their favorite proverbs. The Damascenes, on the other hand, prefer the adage *khabbī irshak-il-abyad liyomak-il-aswad* (save your white piastre for your black day).[62] But the merchants of the capital were also more artful than the Ḥawrānis in money matters, and markedly more calculating. Moreover, the state machine was pliable to their wishes. They were, therefore, able to set the conditions of trade and credit in manners consistent with their interests.

In the Druze Mountain conditions were not much different from those in the Ḥawrān plains. The merchant was a character so unpopular among the Druze peasants that he was the subject of unrestrained denunciation in the ethical literature of their shaikhs. A saying that best summed up their sentiment ran: *ṣāḥib -ut-tijārah lā budda lahu min-ar-riba wa-l-murābī lā budda lahu min-an-nār* (the merchant cannot avoid usury and the usurer cannot avoid hellfire).[63]

The hold of the usurers over the peasants began weakening during the ill-starred union between Egypt and Syria. But the major improvement in the credit situation of farming people occurred after the coming of the Ba'thists to power in 1963.

For one thing, during the past three decades the branch network of the Agricultural Cooperatives Bank—the present name of the chief institutional source of agricultural credit—was progressively widened. The bank operated 30 branches in 1953,[64] 51 in 1974,[65] 62 in 1986,[66] and 71 in 1990.[67] This has helped to bring its facilities nearer to the village level.

For another thing, the amount of loans advanced by the bank rose from a yearly average of 4.8 million Syrian pounds in the first third of the 1950s to a yearly average of 4,631.8 million Syrian pounds between 1986 and 1990 (see Table 3–5). In the interim the exchange value of the Syrian pound in the free or black market depreciated from an average of 3.62 Syrian pounds per $1 in 1953[68] to an average per $1 of 12 Syrian pounds in 1985 and 50 Syrian pounds in 1990.[69]

TABLE 3–5
Loans in Cash and Kind Advanced by the Agricultural Bank of Syria or the Agricultural Cooperatives Bank, 1947–1990

Period	*Yearly Average (in millions Syrian pounds)*	*Yearly Average (% of Loans in Cash)*	*Average Annual Rate of Inflation (%)*
1947–1949[a]	3.3	n.a	
1950–1953[b]	4.8	n.a	
1954–1957[c]	30.0	n.a	
1958–1961[d]	28.6	n.a	
1962[e]	25.7	74.7	
Baʿthist Period			
1963–1966	36.9	57.6	2.6
1967–1970[f]	143.2	70.1	
1971–1975	192.3	57.7	11.8
1976–1980	356.6	51.4	
1981–1985	908.9	66.9	14.3
1986–1990	4,631.8	53.5	

Sources: Based on figures in *Statistical Abstracts* and *the Annual Agricultural Statistical Abstracts* for various years and in International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *The Economic Development of Syria* (Baltimore, 1955), p. 343; Yaḥya ʿArūdkī, *al-Iqtiṣād as-Sūrī al-Ḥadīth* (Damascus, 1972), p. 183; Dr. Naʿīm Jumʿah, *at-Tamwīl-uz-Zirāʿī* (Damascus, 1991), p. 225; and World Bank, *World Development Report, 1993*, p. 238.

[a]Earliest years of independence.
[b]Years of direct military rule.
[c]Years of indirect military rule with left-wing officers in partial control.
[d]Period of union with Egypt.
[e]Secessionist year.
[f]Period of left-wing Baʿthists.

As can be inferred from Table 3–5, a considerable portion of the loans are extended in kind: the bank enjoys a monopoly in the distribution of seeds, insecticides, and fertilizers, and has been supplying these inputs to farmers at subsidized prices. Moreover, the loans are provided at interest rates markedly below the cost of money. During the second half of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s the lending rate for individual farmers was 5.5 percent per annum on all advances and, after that time and up to February 1981, 5.5 percent on advances below 50,000 Syrian pounds and 7.5 percent on higher amounts. Since 1981 the rate on smaller loans has been cut to 3 percent while that for larger loans has remained unaltered. The partiality of the government toward the farmers in the matter of the cost of credit is reflected in the fact that the interest rates charged from 1981 by the Commercial Bank and Industrial Bank to individual merchants and industrialists ranged from 7.5 to 9.0 percent. By 1991 the rates had not changed for the merchants but had risen to 9.5–10 percent for the industrialists.

The agricultural cooperatives are treated even more preferentially. Interest on their loans before 1981 was as low as 4 percent and from that year 2 to 6 percent, but in 1991 4 to 6 percent, depending on the amount advanced. They have also been receiving since the middle of the 1960s a rebate of 5 percent on all products provided by the Agricultural Cooperatives Bank. Over and above this, there has been in recent years a discrimination in their favor with regard to long-term loans, but the bulk of the lending, whether to cooperatives or individual farmers, has been on short-term maturities, that is, on terms of less than one year.[70]

Short-dated loans are, as a rule, for seeds, pesticides, fertilizing material, and working money, and repayable within 300 days. Medium-term loans, from one to five years, and longer-run advances are intended for the purchase of machinery or cattle and for constructions or land improvements.

Agricultural credit was of most benefit to the growers of cotton. Other main beneficiaries were the investors in machinery and equipment, the growers of cereals, and in the mid-1980s the planters of fruit trees.[71]

Except in 1984, 1985, and 1987, the cooperatives, in which most of the smaller farmers are enrolled and whose members accounted in 1991 for 83.7 percent of all Syrians economically active in agriculture excluding employers,[72] received in the Asad period a smaller share of the total credits of the Agricultural Cooperatives' Bank than the private sector, which embraces mostly the larger farmers and the agricultural employers. As is reflected in Table 3–6, the portion of the private sector was 68.9 percent in 1971 and 52.4 percent in 1995,

TABLE 3–6
Distribution by Sectors of Loans in Kind and Cash Extended by the Agricultural Cooperatives' Bank in Selected Years in the Asad Period
(in millions of Syrian pounds)

	Public Sector		*Cooperative Sector*		*Private Sector*	
Year	*Amount*	*%*	*Amount*	*%*	*Amount*	*%*
1971	5.1	2.8	52.2	28.3	127.1	68.9
1975	5.8	2.2	83.5	31.9	172.7	65.9
1979	14.5	3.4	175.5	41.0	237.7	55.6
1983	30.8	3.5	407.3	46.5	438.4	50.0
1987	62.4	3.2	981.4	49.6	933.2	47.2
1990	123.0	1.5	3,957.0	46.0	4,515.0	52.5
1991	137.0	1.2	5,386.0	46.1	6,162.0	52.7
1992	127.0	1.0	5,717.0	42.9	7,474.0	56.1
1993	90.0	0.7	5,747.0	42.8	7,586.0	56.5
1994	110.0	0.8	6,560.0	45.3	7,811.0	53.9
1995	258.0	1.7	7,128.0	45.9	8,134.0	52.4

Sources: Syria, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, *Annual Agricultural Statistical Abstracts, 1971*, pp. 69–71; *1979*, pp. 284–85; and Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstracts*, *1986*, p. 183; *1990*, p. 145; *1994*, p. 147, and *1996*, p. 152.

and that of the agricultural cooperatives 28.3 percent and 45.9 percent in the same years. In this connection it is also necessary to keep in mind that as late as 1995, 52.7 percent of the areas under crop and 57.6 percent of all the cultivable areas were still in the private sector.[73]

If account is taken of the total credit extended by all of Syria's specialized banks, the percentage portion accruing to agriculture was clearly on an acute downward trend between 1971 and 1985 but rose subsequently (see Table 3–7). The lion's share went to commerce and was 56.4 percent in 1957–1959, as high as 78.1 percent in 1971–1975, but dropped to 47.7 percent in 1981–1985, only to rise to 71.6 percent in 1991–1994.[74]

In the absence of more pertinent information, it is not possible to say definitely whether the credit policy of the Agricultural Cooperatives Bank has in practice redounded more to the advantage of the smaller or larger farmers and mustathmirs. In a statement made in 1980 relating to agricultural and industrial loans, however, the minister of economics admitted that "quite a lot of credit has been going to people with adequate finances."[75] Moreover, there is some evidence that not all peasants have been freed from the rapacious grasp of private moneylenders. As late as 1977 one of their representatives complained in the People's Assembly that interest rates of 30 to 40 percent were being exacted from producers.[76] There are obviously factors at work that force the smaller farmers to fall back on usurers. The peasants themselves grumble about bureaucratic red tape. Indeed, loan processing is often too slow, and working funds sometimes do not get to the cultivators when they are needed. The quali-

TABLE 3–7
Agriculture's Share of the Total Credit Extended by All Specialized Banks, 1957–1994
(in million Syrian pounds)

Period	*Total Credit to All Economic Sectors Yearly Average*[a]	*Credit to the Agricultural Sector Yearly Average*	*% Share of Agriculture*
1957–1959	551.9	132.2	24.0
1960–1962	823.8	183.0	22.2
1963–1966	1,007.9	195.4	19.4
1967–1970	1,241.7	244.6	19.7
1971–1975	3,021.5	336.6	11.1
1976–1980	11,299.1	614.2	5.4
1981–1985	25,616.0	1,178.1	4.6
1986–1990	52,909.6	4,803.5	9.1
1991–1994	139,886.9	16,216.1	11.6

Sources: Based on figures in Syra, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract*, *1971*, pp. 312–13; *1974*, p. 797; *1980*, p. 511; *1986*, p. 585; *1990*, p. 445; and *1996*, p. 481.

[a]Keep in mind the average annual inflation rate and the depreciation over the years in the official and free market value of the Syrian pound (Table 3–5).

fying standards are too tight for the smaller farmers who are outside the cooperative system. For these farmers, short-run loans still require the joint guarantee of three individuals, and medium- and long-term loans have to be secured by equity no greater than 60 percent of the value of the land, or 40 percent if the land is covered with trees. The staff of trained credit specialists is also inadequate. But the real problem lies in the fact that the Agricultural Cooperatives Bank still does not have enough resources to meet the needs of the peasants in full, despite the large and rapid expansion in the volume of agricultural credit in the past two decades.

The Reduced Tax Burden

Another factor that has had a significant impact on the income and welfare of farming people is the system of taxation.

In Ottoman times the imposts on agriculture were based on regressive lines, and tended in their actual workings, regardless of the government's own intention, to squeeze resources out of the elements of society that could least easily spare them, hitting hardest the poorer and weaker farmers and peasants. No fraction of the large sums collected from these classes was ever returned to them in the form of social services. There is no evidence of any serious attempt by the government of the day to promote the efficiency of the agricultural producers or raise the quality of their life. From its standpoint they were merely a source of revenue.

Indeed, at some points in certain areas the taxable capacity of the peasants was exceeded. This, conjoined with incursions by Kurdish and Turkoman nomads, or heavy dues imposed by shaikhs of Arab tribes which carried the rubric of *khūwwah*- a corruption of *ukhūwwah* (brotherhood)—led to a wide-scale abandonment of fields and villages. In 1787 C. F. Volney, a European traveler of acute discernment, wrote, "In the ancient *deftars* or registers of imposts [of the pashalic of Aleppo], upwards of 3200 villages were reckoned but at present the collector can scarcely find 400. Such of our merchants, as have resided there twenty years, have themselves seen the greater part of the environs of Aleppo become depopulated."[77] In southern Syria, in the Ḥawrān, incessant exactions reduced the peasant to "a state little better than that of the wandering Arab," as Jean Louis Burckhardt, a careful scholar, observed in 1812. In the hope of receiving milder treatment, tilling families "continually moved" from one place to another only to "find that the same system prevails over the whole country."[78] In the ʿAlawī region a peasant remarked in 1850 or thereabouts, by way of reply to a question about the scarcity of fruit trees: "Why should I plant a tree? I shall not be allowed to eat of its fruit. . . . We grow only as much corn as we can conceal in wells and cisterns."[79] In some areas grain was hidden by the peasants in subterranean rooms called maḥmiyyas or preserved in a deep dry hole cut in the rock and covered with chaff for its better protection.[80] Even in 1910, long after the implementation of the series of reforms known as Tan-

ḍhīmāt, which made tax demands less oppressive and the manner of collection less capricious, many olive growers were cutting down their trees because the taxes "often exceed the revenue they derive from their plantations."[81]

Before and during part of the era of the Tanḍhīmāt (1839—1876) the main tax on agriculture was called māl al-mīrī (the dues of the state) or simply the mīrī, and included the traditional ʿushr or tithe. There is some uncertainty about the treatment of the produce of mulk land or land held as absolute private property, such as the produce of a great part of the fruit orchards of the Ghūṭah oasis. One source suggests that mulk properties were "normally" subject merely to the tithe and paid no more than one-tenth.[82] According to the Ottoman Law of June 9, 1905, however, mulk land incurred no tithe,[83] and it is not clear whether this was an innovation or a carrying over of a long-standing practice. In any case, mulk was confined to the vicinity of towns, and the bulk of agricultural land was legally mīrī or state land, and such portions of its annual gross produce as were surrendered by the peasants to the government were in part viewed as rent. These portions varied from area to area in line with "ancient regulations." In the pashalic of Aleppo they were one-tenth, one-eighth, one-seventh, or one-fifth.[84] In the Ḥawrān the mīrī was raised on the feddān, a term then applicable both to the yoke of oxen and the extent of land tilled by them in a day, which differed with circumstances. In the region of Ḥimṣ the feddān ar-rūmī or Greek feddān was used, and signified two pair of oxen. (Incidentally, in 1812 a peasant who had two or three pair of oxen was deemed to be a wealthy man.)[85] The amount of tax that he or any other cultivator incurred was determined by the headman of his village at the ratio which the number of feddāns bore to the total number of feddāns plowed in the given year, each village being rated in the tax book of the government at a specified lump sum, which "though it is never diminished upon a loss of inhabitants, is sometimes raised upon a supposed increase of population, or upon some other pretext."[86]

The mīrī, which was collected in kind or money at the pleasure of the pasha of the province, was usually farmed by him and often purchased by rich or speculative merchants or moneychangers (*ṣarrāfs*) and sometimes resold by them to other persons for a higher amount. In the early 1810s the collection of the mīrī of the entire pashalic of Damascus was in the hands of the pasha's Jewish ṣarrāfs, who took 2.5 percent on his revenue and expenditure, and whose agents descended on the villages at the time of harvest to gather the mīrī and "generally extort(ed), besides, something for themselves."[87]

Apart from the mīrī, the peasants had to meet the expense of quartering troops on the march and to pay a number of other dues, including a road labor tax, a sheep tax at a set amount per head, and the muḥarramiyyah, an old Ottoman impost that was collected in the villages at an unknown rate on the basis of the number of oxen owned.[88] Over and above this, "extraordinary" contributions were frequently imposed on the peasants by the pasha. As there was no principle behind these contributions, the peasants lived in uncertainty, not knowing what amounts might be exacted from them from year to year. To

meet the demands the women had sometimes to part with their earrings and bracelets and the men with their cattle.[89]

The ultimate net effect of the Tanḍhīmāt was to bring some relief to the peasants by reducing the number of unexpected contributions, circumscribing the powers of oppression of the tax farmers, and correcting some of the more glaring abuses of the tax system. Although assessments became less arbitrary, crops continued to be estimated largely by eye. For the villagers the tax farmer remained the antithesis of good, and his approach inspired dread and dismay. Attempts to do away altogether with the public farming of the taxes and to levy them directly by government agents failed on account of the difficulty of finding competent and reliable functionaries. On the eve of World War I, as the Ottoman period was nearing its end, taxes on cultivation were still being put to public competition, except in the more accessible areas.

By that time the single most important impost on farming people was, as formerly, the ʿushr or tithe. Originally set at one-tenth of the agricultural produce, it now—in 1914—amounted to 12.5 percent and was collected largely in kind at harvest time before reaping, or while the crop was on the threshing floor. Next in importance was the kōda or animal head tax. It was levied on the basis of some semblance of yearly enumeration at the rate of 5 Turkish piastres (about 9 British pence) for every sheep and about 10 piastres for every camel. In addition, a tax of 0.5 percent (0.4 percent in 1886), known as wirkō (Turkish, *vergi*) was raised on the capital value of mīrī land. Inasmuch as mulk land did not pay the tithe, it was subject to a higher wirkō rate: 1.6 percent of its value. Over and above this, a tax of one Turkish gold lira (18s. 0.75d.), called karrūzā, was levied on each person. Every adult male had also to offer free labor three days each year for the construction of roads or make a substitute cash payment of 16 piastres (about 2s. 4d.).[90]

The existing evidence suggests that agricultural people bore the principal burden of taxation,[91] and that in probably both city and country, through "occult influences," the wealthy and influential proprietors paid less than their proper share, the difference being made by overassessment of the poorer elements of the population,[92] even though the flat taxes were themselves invertedly progressive in the sense that their effective rates rose in geometrical progression as the wealth of the taxpayer diminished. From the standpoint of the peasants, the demands of the tax collector or tax farmer were particularly oppressive when they were made on a scanty harvest.[93]

Under the French, who occupied Syria in 1920 and whose Mandate effectively (but not formally) ended in December 1943, the tax system, insofar as it related to cultivation, retained its main features, except for the abolition in 1925 of the public farming of the tithe and its levying subsequently on government account. Assessment of the crops also gave way to a fixed tithe based on the average of the tithe returns for the years 1921–1924. After 1929, however, there was a partial falling back to the old system of assessment. The unit of taxation remained the village as a whole rather than the individual agriculturist.

In principle the weight of the wirkō fell, as before, on the proprietor, but the tithe was sometimes divided between him and his sharecroppers, and sometimes borne entirely by them.[94] The tax burden of the farmers and peasants became very nearly intolerable in the 1930s because of the wide fluctuations of the French franc to which the Syrian pound was tied:[95] measured against the U.S. dollar, the franc depreciated to half its value between 1920 and 1926, swung up by about one-third between 1931 and 1936, only to come down again 50 percent between 1936 and 1939.[96] Moreover, as formerly, the tithe bore "more heavily on villages owned by peasants than on those owned by large landowners," and the peasants, generally, paid far more than their rightful proportion, contributing, as they did, from 20 to 35 percent of their net income in taxes.[97] As they were inarticulate and unorganized, the government turned a deaf ear to their grievances.

No sooner had Syria's large landowners assumed effective control of the state apparatus than they hastened to rid themselves of all direct taxation on agriculture. In 1944 the wirkō and the tithe were annulled. A tax of only 7 percent on the wholesale value of *marketed* agricultural produce was instituted.[98] Its effect was to bring relief to peasants who merely or in the main produced for their own consumption, but it treated all farmers with marketable surpluses alike, regardless of income.

An income tax that had been introduced in 1942 was levied on all incomes except those derived from agriculture and animal husbandry. However, a livestock tax remained in effect. Sheep and goats now paid 1.8, camels 2.0, buffaloes 5.0, and pigs 8.0 Syrian pounds per head, irrespective of their grades or the value of their produce. Cows were exempt.[99]

The net result of the changes in the tax structure was the sharp decline in the relative contribution of agriculture to the public treasury. Whereas in 1939 the taxes affecting primarily the agricultural classes accounted for 39.8 percent of the total tax revenues, the corresponding percentage for 1947 was only 15.2 (see Table 3–8).

Except for the introduction in 1952 of an export duty of 90 Syrian pounds per ton on unginned cotton and 200 Syrian pounds per ton on ginned cotton,[100] the taxes just described form the basic elements of the agricultural tax system that, in a great degree, the old large landowners shaped and the Baʿthists inherited. Being themselves by origin predominantly from the middle segments of the agricultural people, the Baʿthists felt entirely comfortable with the system and kept it intact, save for increases in the tax rates that they had to make in order to help bridge the widening gap between revenue and expenditure.

The present rates of the tax on exported or locally processed agricultural products range from 9 to 12 percent of their average prices. Fruits, vegetables, and olives incur a tax of 12 percent when exported, but no liability when processed locally. The tax on exported cereals is merely 9 percent. Rice, cotton, tobacco, and sugar beets pay 9 percent if exported and 9.5 percent if processed in Syria. The rates for the livestock tax also vary, with sheep and goats paying 2.25 and pigs 11 Syrian pounds per head. Animals aged less than one year are

exempt. The effective rate of the export tax on cotton is 9.8 percent and that of the irrigation fee is 70 Syrian pounds on every hectare profiting from the government's irrigation projects.

Despite the increase in rates, the agricultural classes are now beyond doubt more lightly taxed than urban rentiers or mercantile and manufacturing people. Their most salient advantage is their continued exemption from the income tax, and since 1992 from the profits tax. For a time in 1984 the government thought of including their income in the scope of a consolidated income tax but the idea was put off. Their relative tax burden has also noticeably declined under the Baʿthists. As is clear from Table 3–8, the taxes primarily affecting them provided 13 percent of the national tax collections in 1962–1963, but only 2.5 percent in 1983 and 3.7 percent in 1994. From the same table it is justifiable to infer that for the better part of the 1980s and during the first half of the 1990s the chief sources of the government's tax revenue were the foreign trade and customs fees and, to a greater extent, the tax on the profits of public enterprises, private corporations, and independent individual businessmen, artisans, and professionals. At any rate, in 1994 the latter tax accounted—despite the scaling down under Law No. 20 of July 6, 1991, of the tax liability on net profits from business[101]—for as much as 51.5 percent of the total amount of tax revenue, excluding the revenue from the petroleum pipelines or from consular fees or from duties on foreigners.

In principle, private corporations or individual businessmen can only to a limited degree pass on to consumers, including peasants, their share of the profit tax because of the control that the government exercises over the price of indispensable or major consumer goods. On the other hand, such control, particularly at the retailing level, has not always been effective.[102] The government has the ability, of course, to pass on to consumers in higher prices the profit tax on public enterprises. To the extent that such shifting takes place in the case of nonessential goods, this portion of the profit tax could end up being regressive in its impact upon agricultural and nonagricultural classes of low or middling income

The Rapid Electrification of the Countryside

In the Baʿthist period the farmers and peasants have made real gains in a number of other important areas. The most striking advance has been in rural electrification. As late as 1970 there was no artificial light in all but 218 of Syria's villages (see Table 3–9). Most of the peasants fell asleep and awoke with the sun. But by 1992, thanks largely to the building of the Euphrates dam, no fewer than 7,630 villages, or about 95 percent of all villages, had been electrified. This has done much to improve rural living. In the 1970s one-quarter of the expense of running the electric lines to a village was borne by its inhabitants, but since 1980 the government has been meeting the whole cost.[103] Electricity is now available in most of the countryside at subsidized rates: in 1985 the rate

TABLE 3–8

Revenues from Taxes Affecting the Agricultural and Nonagricultural Classes as Percentages of Total Tax Revenues in Selected Years

Tax	*1939*[a]	*1947*[a]	*1953*[b]	*1962/63*[ac]	*1973*[d]	*1983*[a]	*1994*[d]
1. *Taxes affecting mainly the agricultural classes*							
Tithe and land tax before 1944 and indirect taxes on agricultural production since 1944	39.8	8.6	12.0	9.6	5.2	1.2	2.0
Livestock tax		6.6	4.3	3.0	1.3	0.3	0.1
Irrigation fees			0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
Export tax levied on cotton since 1952			n.a.[e]	0.2	4.4	0.9	1.5
2. *Taxes affecting mainly the non-agricultural classes*							
Tax on wages and salaries	13.6	1.4	1.7	2.4	3.1	5.4	9.3
Profits tax		3.9	6.7	8.5	16.2[f]	32.0[f]	51.5[f]
Rental income tax		2.0	3.0	5.1	5.3	3.5	2.0
Real estate tax							
Tax on return from circulating capital			0.1	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.3
Fees on cars				4.6	3.4	3.9	1.9
Duties on television sets				0.1	0.5	0.3	0.02
Other taxes and duties including duties on luxury consumption	[g]	3.5	3.1	13.5	12.5	11.8	7.0
3. *Taxes affecting the agricultural and non-agricultural classes*							
Property transfer tax	4.5	8.3	12.9	3.5	1.9	1.7	0.9
Inheritance and gift tax					0.9	0.5	0.4

Excise taxes (and for 1939 other indirect taxes)	40.9	32.0	33.3	19.8	21.1	5.1	3.5
Stamp duties		n.a.[h]	n.a.[h]	5.8	5.3	8.3	5.1
Foreign trade and customs fees other than the export tax on cotton except for 1953	1.2	33.7	22.7[e]	23.4	18.4	24.5	14.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total amount of tax revenues[i] in million Syrian pounds	8.8	106.4	186.3	576.1[c]	834.5	8,745[j]	39,589[j]

Sources: Based on figures in U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Economic Developments in the Middle East, 1945 to 1954* (New York, 1955), p. 203; Raphael Patai, ed. *The Republic of Syria* (New Haven, 1956), p. 761; Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract*, *1955*, pp. 218–19; *1965*, pp. 326–27; and Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract*, *1974*, pp. 778–79. The percentages for 1983 are based on figures provided by Syria's Ministry of Finance and those for 1994 on Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract*, 1994, pp. 440–41.

[a]Percentages based on actual tax revenues.

[b]Percentages based on preliminary figures for actual tax revenues.

[c]Percentages and amount relate to the period from 1 July 1962 to 31 December 1963.

[d]Percentages based on budget estimates or planned revenues.

[e]The export tax on cotton for 1953 is included in the figure for foreign trade and customs fees.

[f]Though this tax is identified as "an income tax on the industrial, commercial, and noncommercial trades and professions," it includes the tax on the net profits of public enterprises and not merely the profits of private individuals and corporations.

[g]"Other taxes and duties" for 1939 are lumped together with excise taxes and stamp duties shown in section 3.

[h]1947 and 1953 figures for stamp duties are included with "other taxes and duties" shown in section 2.

[i]The figures for total tax revenues do not include the revenue from the petroleum pipelines or from duties on foreigners or from consular fees.

[j]These are rounded figures.

TABLE 3–9
Electrification of Syria's Villages 1903–1992

Number of Villages Electrified between 1903 and 1970	*Total Number of Villages with Electricity at the End of*				*Estimated % of Villages Electrified by the End of 1992*
	1975	*1980*	*1984*	*1992*	
218	372	1,991	5,729	7,630	95

Sources: Tishrīn, 10 March 1981, p. 5; *ath-Thawrah*, 30 December 1984, p. 4; and Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile*, *Syria 1993/94*, p. 31.

was 0.25 Syrian pounds (6.4 U.S. cents) per kilowatt hour for farms as against 0.55 (14 U.S. cents) for commercial enterprises.[104]

Since 1985, however, there have been countrywide outages (daily five to six hours in late 1986 and four to five hours in 1992) due to a pronounced rise in power demand, low rainfall, greater use by Turkey of the upper waters of the Euphrates, and a consequent decline in hydroelectricity output from the Ṭabqah dam.[105]

The Spread of Safe Water Networks

Countrywide water networks are also being built at a rapid pace. In preindependence days few village homes had running water. Many villages had only shallow wells close at hand, which were sometimes bacterially unsafe and went dry in years of drought. Women had to fetch water from springs or deeper wells that were often remote from their huts but more regular in yield and, as a rule, pure at the source. Such conditions were not peculiar to Third World countries like Syria. In the United States, for example, only one in ten farms had "running water installations" in 1920, and six in ten as late as 1960.[106]

In the last three decades Syria's progress in this regard was remarkable. By 1980, 54 percent of the rural population and 97 percent of the urban population had been provided with piped drinking water supplies. Under the 1981–1985 Five Year Plan these percentages were expected to rise to 67 and 100, respectively.[107] Rural complaints touching on access to safe water continue to be voiced from time to time, but they relate less to the availability of services than to the poor maintenance of existing water lines.[108]

The Expansion of Rural Health Care

In health care, villages have always lagged far behind towns. In preindependence years when the peasants fell ill they normally lay in a corner of their hut until they recovered or died. The donkey and the mule were often their only

means of transport, and a great many of them were several days away from the nearest physician or hospital. Only on rare occasions were they visited by mobile medical units. In 1939, no fewer than 69.8 percent of all physicians had their practice in Damascus and Aleppo (see Table 3–10). Hospital accommodation was also concentrated in these cities and in some of the main provincial towns.[109] After independence medical facilities and personnel grew gradually. By 1963 the number of physicians had more than doubled in comparison with 1939, and the number of hospital beds had increased almost fourfold (see Table 3–10), but their distribution over the country continued to be markedly unequal,

TABLE 3–10
Some Health-related Indicators for Syria in Selected Years

	1939	*1963*	*1983*	*1993*
Number of physicians	474	978	4,947	13,863
Population per physician	6,992	5,105	1,943	966
Percentage of physicians				
in the Damascus and Aleppo provinces	77.6[a]	68.8	60.0	50.6
in the rest of the country[b]	22.4	31.2	40.0	49.4
Total number of hospitals	25[c]	78	169	263
number of beds in all hospitals	1,336[c]	5,134	10,857	14,596
number of beds per thousand inhabitants	0.4	1.12	1.15	1.08
number of state hospitals	11	26	39	53
number of beds in state hospitals	800	3,793	8,341	10,725
Number of "health centers for basic services"	—	—	458[d]	658
percentage of such centers in rural areas	—	—	72.3[d]	73.3[e]
Crude death rate per thousand population	n.a	18[f]	8[g]	6[h]
Infant mortality per thousand live births	n.a.	132[f]	62[g]	37[h]

Sources: Based on data in *al-Akhbār* and *an-Nizām*, *Dalīl-uj-Jumhūrriyyat-is-Suriyyah, 1939–1940*, (Damascus, n.d.), pp. 489–500 and 549–51; Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division, *Syria*, p. 249; *Al-Baʿth*, 19 November 1988, p. 7; Syria, Ministry of Health, *Annual Statistical Reports* and Office of Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstracts* for various years; and World Bank, *World Development Reports* for various years.

[a]The percentage for the city of Damascus alone was 44.9 and for the city of Aleppo 24.9.

[b]That is, in the six other provinces in 1939 and in the eleven other provinces in the other years.

[c]These figures are for 1938.

[d]These figures are for 1984.

[e]This percentage is for 1987, when the total number of health centers was 521.

[f]These rates are for 1960.

[g]These rates are for 1980.

[h]These rates are for 1991.

even though primary health care became now available to some of the peasants through the creation of village dispensaries.[110]

In the Baʿthist period the advance in the medical care of rural people has been uneven. Development of hospital services in the country as a whole was kept back in recent decades by a shortage of funds: between 1963 and 1993 the bed/inhabitant ratio declined from 1.12 to 1.08 per thousand (see Table 3–10). It is ironic—but in part explicable by Syria's need for hard currency—that in 1993 there were twice as many hotel beds (30,249)[111] as hospital beds (14,596). However, the physician/inhabitant ratio rose from 1:5,105 in 1963 to 1:1,943 in 1983, and 1:966 in 1993 (as compared with 1:662 in 1960, 1:439 in 1983, and 1:420 in 1990 for the United States).[112] This was achieved in spite of the considerable outflow of Syrian doctors to Europe, the United States, and the Arab countries: in the middle 1970s the Syrians pursuing the profession of medicine abroad were four times as many as those exercising it in their native land.[113] At the same time, the crude death rate per thousand population dropped from 18 in 1960 to 6 in 1991 and the infant mortality per thousand live births from 132 in 1960 to 37 in 1991. In 1993 there was also a markedly different and relatively less unequal distribution of doctors among the provinces compared with 1939 or 1963. For example, in 1993 Ṭarṭūs had a better physician/inhabitant ratio (1:724) than Damascus (1:771). So did Ḥimṣ (1:831) compared to Aleppo (1:853). The provinces with the worst corresponding ratio were al-Ḥasakeh (1:2,235), Idlib (1:1,760), Dayr-az-Zūr (1:1,508), ar-Raqqah (1:1,354), and Ḥamāh (1:1,320). On the other hand, in the same year Damascus province accounted for 37.3 percent of all hospital beds, for 21.7 percent of the country's population. The corresponding percentages for Aleppo were 22.9 and 20.6; the least served in this respect were the provinces of al-Ḥasakeh (with 4.1 percent of the beds as against 7.5 percent of the population) and Idlib (with respective percentages of 2.4 and 6.8).[114]

Hampered by relatively limited financial resources and the great outlay that modern hospitals require, but desirous of reaching as many rural patients as possible, the government has been in the last two decades placing heavy emphasis on expanding and strengthening its chain of "health centers for basic services." The old dispensaries, which numbered 96 in 1955[115] and 170 in 1971,[116] were assimilated into the health centers, which in 1983 added up to 458 and in 1993 to 658 (see Table 3–10). Of these more than 70 percent operated in rural areas.

Normally, a rural health center is staffed by two qualified paramedical workers or a nurse and a doctor, who often is a recent graduate of a medical school fulfilling his two years of compulsory rural service, though it is still possible for graduates to circumvent this obligation through covert influences. To cope with the rising demand for health care in the countryside, the government has also been steering military doctors toward the rural centers.[117]

The rural centers are equipped with inferior facilities and the care they provide may not be of high quality, but they and the mobile medical units have had undoubted successes, including the inoculation of hundreds of thousands of

peasant children against smallpox, diphteria, measles, tuberculosis, polio, and other serious diseases.[118] They are also shorn of commercialism in the sense that they offer their services free of charge.

The Development of the Means of Communication and Conveyance

Farmers have profited considerably from developments in one other area, that of transport and communication. Between 1963 and 1993 the country's rail cars tripled, its standard-gauge rail tracks nearly quadrupled, the length of its all-weather asphalted roads increased fivefold, its motor hauling vehicles of all types twelvefold, and its buses and microbuses almost thirteenfold (see Table 3–11). Its far-off northeastern agricultural region and the reclaimed irrigated areas on the Euphrates and Khābūr were connected by rail and road with the densely populated Mediterranean coast and fertile western uplands. By the middle 1980s, there were, 1,126 kilometers of new rural roads in four northeastern provinces alone. Another string of new roads linked some 500 villages in the Latakia region. In the second half of the 1980s, "more than 80 percent" of the villages of Aleppo province were within reach by roads traversable in all seasons.[119]

The telephone network has also been markedly expanded. In 1986 about 12.6 percent of all rural households (and 50.8 percent of all urban households) had telephone service, compared with about 1.6 percent (and 12.9 percent, respectively) two decades earlier.[120]

At the same time, the means of transport continued to be overconcentrated in the city and province of Damascus, which in 1993 accounted for 21.7 percent of the population but for 37.3 percent of all buses and microbuses, and 54 percent of all passenger cars. However, its share of trucks, tankers, and pick-ups was 23.4 percent and, therefore, not out of proportion.[121] Despite the overconcentration of buses in Damascus, the demand in the capital for public transportation is greater than the supply, particularly during rush hours. The problem had, at least in the mid-1980s, its source in the disabling in any one day of a significant percentage of the city's bus fleet due to bad handling, poor maintenance, inadequate coordination, and a serious shortage of spare parts and skilled mechanics.[122]

From the standpoint of the farmers and peasants, many of whom still remember the days when their only means of conveyance were riding and pack animals, the system of transport, though still inadequate, is now faster, more dependable, often less costly, and on the whole better adapted to serve their needs and interests. It has undoubtedly led to the enlargement of their markets and a more suitable distribution of their products, particularly perishables. It has also given a greater impulse to agricultural production.

But there is another side to the effects of improved communications. New values and attitudes are breaking the old rhythms of rural life, a process accelerated by the introduction of television and the spread of transistor radios. A

TABLE 3–11
Syrian Transport and Communications in Selected Years

	1943	*1963*	*1993*
Telephone facilities			
Telephone centers	n.a.	77	3,750
Urban (automatic telephone) subscribers	n.a.	40,518	360,500[a]
Rural (manual and semi-automatic telephone subscribers)	n.a.	7,975	92,300[a]
All-weather roads (in kms.)			
Asphalted	1,440	4,926	26,299
Metalled or paved but nonasphalted	1,174	898	7,910
Leveled earthen roads	3,126	2,062	2,168
Motor vehicles in circulation			
Trucks, tankers, and pick-ups	4,283[b]	12,778	153,394
Buses and microbuses	1,238[b]	1,849	23,972
Passenger cars (including taxicabs)	4,707[b]	23,095	125,807
Motorcycles	753[b]	3,448	80,533
Railways (in kms.)			
Standard-gauge	530	543	2,015
Narrow-gauge	301	301	327
Rolling Stock			
Locomotives	156[bc]	76	195
Rail cars of all types	2,214[bc]	1,744	5,207

Sources: Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1963,* pp. 225–26 and 239; *1964,* p. 230; Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *1978,* pp. 310, 311, and 314; *1994,* pp. 228–32 and 244. Railway trackage statistics for 1943 are based on figures in Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division, *Syria* (April 1943), pp. 370–84.

Note: The Central Bureau of Statistics does not publish figures on passenger or transport air planes.

[a]These rounded figures are for 1986 and, with the corresponding figures for 1963, are taken from *ath-Thawrah* (Damascus), 19 November 1986, p. 7. There are no such figures in the *Statistical Abstracts*.

[b]These figures are for 1948.

[c]Many of these locomotives and tailraces were aged and would appear to have been subsequently withdrawn from service.

comment in the 1980s by a farmer from Ṣabghah, a village some forty kilometers to the east of Raqqah, if somewhat marked by exaggeration, summed up poignantly a crucial normative change in many of the Euphrates villages. "[Formerly]," he said, "things were run on the tribal principle and nobody used to 'eat' [out of house and home] another man close to him. Now . . . [the state] rules the world . . . if you have no money no one cares about you."[123] A similar note is discernible in a 1992 complaint by a rural agricultural supervisor from another region. "Aforetime," he said, "cooperation [among the peasants of our

village] was their method in life. . . . Today . . . the old union of hearts and practice of mutual help have given way to dealings based on self-interest."[124]

The Intensification of the State's Educational Efforts

In preindependence years, the schooling of the children of the peasants was sadly neglected. Educational services were cramped in part by the lack of funds, but the state's relatively meager investment in people may also have been the result of deliberate policy by colonial officials, who probably did not favor the proliferation of schools or saw little value in mass-produced literacy, even though they took great interest in the propagation of the French language in the cities.

The mind and character of the peasants were shaped primarily by the influences of nature and agricultural life except in some areas, as in the Ghūṭah, where in every considerable village that had a mosque some peasant boys attended the katātīb, the Qur'an schools, and Friday sermons played a role in the moral and ideological development of the local communities.

With the attainment of financial autonomy by the Syrian government in 1936—and more so after the country's independence a decade later—the state's educational efforts intensified. The total educational enrollment in Syria rose from 0.13 million in 1938[125] to 0.73 million in 1963.[126] As late as 1960, however, as is clearly reflected in Table 3–12, more than three-fourths of the rural population were still illiterate and the incidence of illiteracy among rural women was as high as 94.8 percent. Moreover, rural schools scarcely met the barest needs.

Incidentally, Syria's state educational services were never as formally elitist in orientation as those of Egypt. They did not have Egypt's discriminatory dual elementary education, with its parallel networks of inferior elementary schools for the poor and superior primary schools for the well-to-do, which remained in force in Egypt until 1949.[127] In practice, however, Syria's village schools were lower in quality than its schools in the cities, and the upper and middle urban and rural classes had a near monopoly on secondary and higher education in both countries throughout the first half of this century.

Under the Ba'thists, educational efforts took on much larger proportions. By state action, rural primary schools multiplied from fewer than 3,000 in 1963 to 4,131 in 1970, and 6,302 in 1980.[128] The rural holders of primary certificates increased from 70,843 in 1960 to 1.16 million in 1991, that is, from 3.7 percent to 27.9 percent of the rural population over ten years of age. In the same period, the rural recipients of an intermediate or secondary training rose from 22,976 to 677,000 (in rounded figures), and those with a college degree from 963 to 61,000.[129] At present practically all peasant boys and all but a small percentage of peasant girls aged six to eleven years are enrolled in school.[130]

It is necessary to look beyond these numbers, however. At least as late as 1986, qualitatively the progress on all levels had not been as impressive. Short-

TABLE 3–12
Percentage Distribution of the Rural and Urban Population of Syria Aged 10 and above According to Level of Education, 1960, 1976, and 1991

	1960			*1976*			*1991*		
Level of Education	*Urban*	*Rural*	*Total*	*Urban*	*Rural*	*Total*	*Urban*	*Rural*	*Total*
Illiterate									
Male	32.7	59.3	49.1	16.7	28.8	23.0	8.5	12.2	10.2
Female	66.6	94.8	84.2	41.1	73.2	58.0	22.9	39.4	30.7
Total	49.2	76.9	66.4	28.5	50.5	40.0	15.4	25.4	20.1
Read only or read and write									
Male	42.7	32.2	36.2	33.8	35.4	34.6	25.5	31.1	28.1
Female	21.2	4.1	10.5	25.2	14.7	19.7	22.1	26.6	24.2
Total	32.2	18.2	23.5	29.6	25.3	27.4	23.9	28.9	26.3

Primary certificate									
Male	15.3	6.4	9.8	24.9	20.5	22.6	33.2	33.0	33.1
Female	8.5	0.9	3.8	18.6	8.6	13.3	27.5	22.5	25.1
Total	12.0	3.7	6.8	21.8	14.7	18.1	30.5	27.9	29.3
Intermediate or secondary certificate or certificate from intermediate institute									
Male	7.8	2.1	4.3	20.9	14.4	17.6	27.6	21.1	24.6
Female	3.5	0.2	1.4	14.2	3.4	8.5	25.1	11.2	18.6
Total	5.7	1.2	2.9	17.6	9.0	13.1	26.4	16 3	21.6
University degree									
Male	1.5	0.1	0.6	3.7	0.9	2.2	5.2	2.6	4.0
Female	0.2	0.0	0.1	1.0	0.1	0.5	2.4	0.3	1.4
Total	0.9	0.0	0.4	2.4	0.5	1.4	3.8	1.5	2.7

Sources: Syria, State Planning Commission 1979 cited in United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia, *The Population Situation in the ECWA Region: Syrian Arab Republic* (Beirut, 1980), pp. 12–18; the 1991 figures are based on data in Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1994,* pp. 76–77.

ages of qualified teachers in rural districts continued to be acute. Classrooms were crowded to excess. School buildings were sometimes badly maintained. Other defects included unequal advance in different regions, inflexible school programs often ill-suited to the practical needs of peasant society, a high drop-out rate for peasant girls by the end of primary education, the economic insecurity of a portion of the teaching staff, close state controls, strictures on the freedom of thought, and a marked tendency to produce a compliant generation.[131]

The educational gap between the peasant masses and the classes above them in town and country, if narrowing, remains significant. By 1991, 12.2 percent of rural males aged ten and above were still illiterate. The corresponding percentage for rural females was 39.4 (see Table 3–12). Moreover, a large proportion of those who can "read only or read and write," and not a small segment of those with formal certificates, are probably functionally illiterate in the sense that they are minimally prepared to function effectively in society.

All the same, the strong commitment of the existing regime to mass instruction and the remarkable growth in rural educational services have undeniably led, even if indirectly, to the improvement of the economic opportunities and level of living of great numbers of peasants.

CHAPTER 4

Economic Efficiency

Has Syria's agriculture been progressing under the Baʿthists? Are its soil and water more rationally exploited now than they were prior to 1963? Have its farmers become more skilled and more efficient?

Land Use

In terms of the utilization of land, it appears from the figures in Table 4–1—which should be regarded as approximately accurate—that the area under cultivation declined from an annual average of 6.5 million hectares in the first half of the 1960s to an annual average of 5.5 million hectares during the first third of the 1990s. Alongside this decrease of 15.3 percent in cultivated land, there was a fall of 82 percent in the area left fallow. The rise of 40.6 percent in the rainfed area under crops is related to the sharp drop in idled acreage. So is to some extent the increase of 35.7 percent in rangelands or pastures. However, some of the cultivable but uncultivated areas were also converted into grazing land.

The decline in the area under cultivation stems from a number of factors. One is the withdrawal by unmonitored landowners of underground water in excess of aquifer recharge. For example, in the region of Qalamūn, east of the main anti-Lebanon ridge, about 2,200 wells have been dug or drilled in less than a decade. As one local peasant put it, "the water has been murdered."[1] The countryside of Damascus also suffers from a careless and wasteful use of underground water. This, in conjunction with a low rainfall, occasioned a 70 percent decline in the yield of its wells in 1986.[2] More than that, the overuse for industrial and domestic purposes of part of the Barada River and its tributaries, upon which the Ghūṭah oasis depends for its existence, has led to the pollution of its waters and a warning by the leading organ of the ruling party that "the Barada is dying." "Ten years ago," complained an eighty-year-old-peasant from this region in 1986, "my family used to irrigate twenty-one dūnums but today it irrigates only three by means of wells that yield only six inches at a depth of thirty meters, for the Barada River no longer flows into its Mlayḥah branch in the summer and has been reduced to a brackish and polluted trickle . . . that desiccates and kills the trees."[3]

Some expanses of agricultural land have been lost through waterlogging or the spread of salinity arising from the mismanagement of irrigation water or from poor drainage, as in the Euphrates basin or the region of al-Ghāb, east of the ʿAlawī Mountains.[4] Other cultivated tracts have been lost to haphazard resi-

TABLE 4–1
Land Use 1961–1993 (yearly average in thousand hectares)

	Cultivated Area						
Period	*Irrigated*	*Rainfed*	*% of Cropped Area Irrigated*	*Fallow*	*Total*	*Steppes and Pastures*	*Forests*
1961–1965	579	2894	16.7	3043	6516	5945	466
1966–1970	503	2673	15.8	2796	5972	5426	449
1971–1975	563	2747	17.0	2542	5852	6607	473
1976–1980	535	3381	13.7	1685	5601	8430	458
1981–1985	594	3289	15.3	1766	5649	8339	498
1986–1990	664	3957	14.4	968	5589	8132	608
1991–1993	902	4096	22.2	548	5519	8070	657
Percentage increase or decrease in annual average in 1991–1993 as compared with 1961–1965	+55.8	+40.6		−82.0	−15.3	+35.7	+41.0

Source: Based on figures in Syria, *Statistical Abstract*, various years.

dential or commercial construction or, in the words of the Peasants' General Union, to "the cancerous advance of cement formations."[5] The area occupied by buildings and public roads increased from 246,000 hectares in 1974 to 414,000 hectares in 1986 and 602,000 hectares in 1993.[6] The extent of good land lost through this expansion is difficult to determine, but has been large enough to "alarm" the Peasants' General Union. Perhaps the region most detrimentally affected is Syria's fertile coastal strip, a considerable proportion of which appears to have been "gobbled up" by the broad Ṭarṭūs-Latakia thoroughfare, the Banyās refinery, the Ṭarṭūs cement factory, other public projects, and "hundreds" of residences and "chalets."[7] More than that, some 25,000 hectares of arable land were taken out of use to make room for the Tabqah dam and its reservoir.[8]

On the other hand, much of the decrease in the cultivated area has been the product of a deliberate and necessary cutback. The area under the plough, including fallow land, had expanded very rapidly and without any restrictions in the twenty-five years preceding the Baʿthist capture of power. In fact, it almost quadrupled, rising from about 1.75 million hectares in 1938 to 6.9 million hectares in 1963,[9] mainly under the stimulus of higher agricultural prices during World War II and in the postwar period. As Syria's four best soil types cover no more than 3.96 million hectares—alluvial, 0.53; groundwater soils, 0.37; red Mediterranean, 0.85 and grumusol (dark red, brown, dark brown, and black), 2.21 million hectares—most of the expansion took place in areas of inferior cinnamonic (yellowish brown) soil and lower average precipitation.[10] The red Mediterranean soil receives a mean annual rainfall of more than 600 mm. or 23.6 inches, the grumusol type between 300 and 600 mm. (11.8–23.6 inches), and the cinnamonic only between 150 and 300 mm. (5.9–11.8 inches).

The boundaries of cultivation were pushed out most in the northeast, that is, in the Syrian part of the Jazīrah or the "island" between the Euphrates and the Tigris. In this region where the land belonged by and large to the public domain, at least in theory, a system of "grab" came into existence. Powerful tribal shaykhs, unfamiliar with agriculture, "seized such land as they wished" and developed it in their own manner. As early as 1949 Syria's director of rural education, an ex-inspector of school gardens in Palestine for twenty years, warned that the Jazīrah, which he compared to "the wild west of America in Gold Rush days," would "revert to desert again" unless the importance of crop rotation was impressed upon the new agriculturists. He gave many examples of "the same crop being grown on the same piece of ground year after year with disastrous results."[11] This practice obviously led to the removal of soil nutrients and to the use not only of marginal rainfall but of the stored water in the soil. Nor did the merchants, who participated in the expansion of agriculture by leasing land from tribal shaykhs and investing in tractors, show concern for the maintenance of the quality of the soil, since they sought quick returns and failed to take a long view.

Loss of soil fertility by the continual raising of a given crop was not the only consequence of the extension of the margin of cultivation. No less serious was

the contraction of rangeland. Sheep—Syria's most important livestock animals—were forced off to scantier pastures. From this and a concomitant increase in the sheep population, overgrazing ensued with harmful effects on the steppe's vegetation. In this sense the reconversion into pastures under the Baʿthists of some of the marginally productive lands and the opening of some of the arable but uncultivated areas for the feeding of sheep should be viewed as positive developments.

But other influences were simultaneously at work that encouraged the partial abandonment of marginal land and the expansion of pastures, namely, the shortage and high cost of agricultural labor[12] and, with the rising standard of living of the people, the relative increase in the demand—and, therefore, in the price—of meat, milk, and related products. Between 1962 and 1985 the index for the wholesale price of meat increased eightfold, and between 1985 and 1993 more than fivefold in the wake of the liberalization of the market and devaluation in 1988 of the official exchange rate of the Syrian pound from 3.925 to 11.20/11.25 to the dollar.[13] In the same periods there were, respectively, a 5.6-fold and 4.7-fold rise in the retail price of fresh milk in Damascus.[14] The price for meat or milk was all along more sensitive to the workings of the market than, say, the price for wheat or barley, which was more tightly regulated by the state.

However, by reason of the increase of Syria's sheep herd from 5.07 million in 1965 to 13.36 million in 1983,[15] the shortage of feed became a serious problem and was so acute in 1984 (because of a drought and a lack of hard currency) that sheep farmers and sheepowning merchants had to cut down on their herds and sell some of their animals on occasion at 20 percent of their value one year before.[16] By 1985 Syria's sheep population had dropped to 10.99 million, but rose subsequently only to fall to 10.14 million in 1993.[17]

The severity of the feed shortage problem has been accentuated by the vigorous growth of dairy and poultry production. In 1965 Syria had only 274,000 dairy cows, 163,000 of which were lactiferous and yielded 149,000 tons of milk. By 1993 it had 680,000 dairy cows, 289,000 of which lactated and yielded 742,000 tons of milk despite the occurrence of the rinderpest in two of the intervening years.[18] In the same period the number of chickens, including nonlayers, rose from 4.59 million to 17.10 million, and table egg production from 306 million to 1.8 billion eggs.[19]

Poultry alone in the middle 1980s required at least 360,000 tons of maize or yellow corn annually, but in the period 1986–1993 Syria's annual maize crop was as low as 56,900 tons (in 1987) and no higher than 225,000 tons (in 1991). In view of the country's persistent shortage of foreign currency the balance could not be imported in its entirety. There is a similar problem with another poultry feed ingredient, soybean meal, which Syria does not produce, although its annual requirement is 137,000 tons.[20] Lately barley has been used extensively as a substitute for part of the maize in poultry feed rations, but barley is in high demand for feeding not only cattle but also sheep because of the poor grass condition on the Syrian steppe. In a bad crop year the dairy and sheep

sectors are severely affected, and some of the poultry producers may be forced out of business.[21]

In order to ease the feed problem, the General Organization for Fodder, which was founded in 1974, encouraged the planting on irrigated land after the wheat harvest of a hybrid short maize seed of French provenance, and has been contemplating the mechanization of maize production in 10,000 hectares on the Euphrates River basin. It also experimented with locally produced substitute feed mixes.[22] Part of Syria's sheep herd has been taken off the range and arrangements have been made on a cooperative basis to feed lambs a local cottonseed meal in sheep pens. At the same time, jointly with the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA)—which was founded in 1977 and has a 948-hectare experiment farm at Tel Hadya, near Aleppo—the Ministry of Agriculture has introduced new techniques to increase yields of barley, such as intercropping legumes—which store nitrogen in the soil—with barley and adding phosphate fertilizer to the phosphate-deficient soils of northern Syria.[23]

It is necessary to touch on another aspect of the changes in land use reflected in Table 4–1: the partial abandonment of fallow farming as an alternative to ruining marginal lands. Under the traditional system the land was left unsown every second or third year with a view to averting soil exhaustion. As can be inferred from the figures cited in the table, in the second half of the 1980s only 17.3 percent and in the first third of the 1990s only 9.9 percent of the cultivated land was allowed repose, as compared with 46.7 percent in the first half of the 1960s. This reduction in the use of fallow—to the extent that it involves the expansion of cropped areas—highlights the growing tendency to break with the established course of agriculture and denotes the adoption of better patterns of crop rotation and more intensive farming methods, a subject that will receive fuller attention at a more appropriate point.

One other fact mirrored in Tables 4–1 and 4–2 is worthy of comment: the relatively small increase between 1963 and 1990 in the total irrigated area, despite the large sums invested by Syria in taming the Euphrates River and its tributaries. Part of the explanation for this lies in the fact that many of the areas on the Euphrates now irrigated by gravity flow were previously irrigated by pumps. The proportion of the total irrigated area dependent upon water pumped up from rivers, springs, and lakes dropped from 59 percent in 1963 to 31.3 percent in 1990, whereas the proportion irrigated by gravity flow increased from 16 to 19.3 percent. But most of the increase was due to the considerable extension of pump irrigation from wells which, as already pointed out, has led to the lowering of the water table in several regions of the country.

The comparatively small increment in irrigated acreage before 1990 is also explicable by the difficulties that have beset land reclamation, particularly to the east of the Euphrates (Ṭabqah) dam. One of the problems has been the presence of alkali salts in the ground, which increased with improved irrigation and necessitated further expenditure with a view to a more efficient draining of the land. Another problem has been the gypsum in the soil, a mineral that tends to

TABLE 4–2
Irrigated Land Area According to Methods of Irrigation, Selected Years (in percentages)

Year	*Total Irrigated Area in Thousand Hectares*	*Irrigated by Pumps from Rivers, Springs, and Lakes %*	*Irrigated by Pumps from Wells %*	*Irrigated from Rivers by Water Wheels %*	*Irrigated by Gravitation from Rivers, Springs, Lakes, and Floods %*
1946	284.0	81	5	—(?)	14
1963	671.2	59	24	1.2	16
1970	450.8	49	30	0.9	20
1975	516.1	40	40	0.2	20
1980	539.1	35	44	0.2	21
1985	651.9	31	49	—	20
1990	693.0	31.3	49.4	—	19.3
1993	1013.3	22.5	60.2	—	17.3

Sources: Based on figures in Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1978*, p. 192; *1981*, p. 176; and *1994*, p. 106 and Syria, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, *Annual Agricultural Statistical Abstract, 1986*, p. 31.

dissolve when the land is irrigated, causing the ground to subside and canal linings to crack. Linings have, therefore, to be devised that would be watertight and at the same time economical. Initially the canals were double-lined with special concrete, which tripled the estimated reclamation cost.[24] For these and other reasons—the decline in government revenues and foreign exchange shortages—land development in the Euphrates basin slowed down. Under the 1981–1985 Plan only 17,500 new hectares came under the plough in this basin, just 8.7 percent of the originally planned 201,000 hectares and 33.3 percent of the revised 52,500-hectare target.[25] Altogether, since the completion of the Euphrates dam and until 1985, 65,958 hectares have been reclaimed—the 21,456 hectares of the pilot project east of Raqqah, 23,502 hectares in the middle Euphrates valley,[26] and 21,000 hectares in the western Maskeneh plains.[27]

However, the completion in March of 1985 of the principal 18-kilometer headreach canal linking the Euphrates dam to the lower Balīkh region and involving, eventually, the irrigation by flow of 100,000 hectares in the Balīkh basin; the coming soon into service of the regulatory Baʿth dam built 27 kilometers downstream from Ṭabqah; the drainage work now being carried out over 125,000 hectares in the lower Euphrates; the inauguration in 1983 of the Khābūr project, which is designed to irrigate 137,600 hectares; the apparent overcoming of problems with gypsum-rich soils and cracked irrigation canals through the use of butane or polyvinyl chloride sheeting; and the building of many smaller dams and irrigation networks on other rivers, such as the recently completed 16 November dam on the northern al-Kabīr River in the Latakia province—all these things and other related projects in hand are expected to lead to a marked expansion in Syria's irrigated areas in the near future and partly explain their increase from 693,000 hectares in 1990 to 1,013,300 hectares in 1993.[28] But, as may be inferred from Table 4–2, most of the increase in this period was in the areas irrigated by pumps from wells.

The Agricultural Growth Trends and Related Causal Factors

By reason of the fact that as late as the first third of the 1990s irrigated land accounted for only 22.2 percent of the whole cropped area–agricultural production is still highly sensitive to variations in rainfall and has been subject to unforeseeable and destructive droughts. This explains the strong year-to-year fluctuations in the relative level of the aggregate volume of farm output reflected in Table 4–3. As expressions of average change, of course, the indices in this table have inherent limitations because the constituent plant and animal products to which they apply undergo varied shifts in price and in relative significance, particularly as the period of comparison lengthens.[29] Nevertheless, these indices can be regarded as broadly expressive of the general direction of change in agricultural production. Viewed together with the figures on agricultural growth rates in Table 4–5 and on the evolution in the output and yield of Syria's main crops in Table 4–4, they reveal that agricultural production rose

TABLE 4–3
Index of Total Agricultural (Plant and Animal) Production, 1956–1995 (1956 = 100)

Year	*Index*	*Year*	*Index*	*Year*	*Index*	*Year*	*Index*
1956	100	1966	99	1976	231	1986	275
1957	114	1967	126	1977	191	1987	247
1958	75	1968	117	1978	235	1988	335
1959	77	1969	130	1979	206	1989	250
1960	68	1970	111	1980	250	1990	299
1961	86	1971	123	1981	262	1991	312
1962	130	1972	173	1982	270	1992	341
1963	127	1973	114	1983	272	1993	341
1964	137	1974	185	1984	247	1994	374
1965	136	1975	186	1985	260	1995	387[a]

Sources: The index is from or based on figures in Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1963*, p. 268; *1965*, p. 262; *1971*, p. 64; Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract 1977*, p. 178; *1981*, p. 168; *1986*, p. 136; *1987*, p. 113; *1991*, p. 98; *1994*, p. 100; and *1996*, p. 105.

[a]Provisional.

TABLE 4–4
Evolution in the Output and Yield of Syria's Principal Food Grains and Industrial Crops, 1934–1995 (average yearly output in thousands of tons; average yield per cropped hectare in metric tons)

Period	*Wheat Production*	*Yield*	*Barley Production*	*Yield*	*Cotton Production*	*Yield*	*Sugar Beet Production*	*Yield*
1934–1938	459	1.0	290	1.1	6	0.2	—	—
1946–1950	696	0.9	298	0.9	19	0.5	—	—
1951–1955	737	0.6	373	0.8	61	0.3	n.a.	n.a.
1956–1960	849	0.6	357	0.5	268	1.1	70	17.8
1961–1965	1093	0.8	649	0.9	417	1.7	119	21.2
1966–1970	767	0.7	433	0.7	373	1.4	185	23.8
1971–1975	1249	0.8	438	0.6	406	1.9	192	23.4
1976–1980	1641	1.1	821	0.7	370	2.2	312	21.9
1981–1985	1607	1.3	831	0.6	448	2.7	852	30.3
1986–1990	1757	1.5	1129	0.6	423	2.8	391	24.0
1991–1995	3339.8	2.3	1349.8	0.7	603	3.1	1222.5	41.2

Sources: Based on figures in U.N., Department of Economic Affairs, *Review of Economic Conditions in the Middle East 1951–52* (New York, March 1953), pp. 14, 17, and 27; Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East*, p. 72; U.N. Economic and Social Office, Beirut, "Past Developments and Growth Prospects in the Agricultural Sector of Syria" (April 1971) (mimeographed), p. 66; Yahya ʿArudki, *al-Iqtiṣad as-Suri al-Ḥadith* (The Modern Syrian Economy), Part 1 (Damascus, 1972), pp. 130 and 133; and Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Ststistics, *Statistical Abstract*, *1976*, pp. 245 and 232; *1980*, pp. 180 and 188–89; *1984*, pp. 134 and 140–41; *1986*, pp. 148–49 and 154–55; *1991*, pp. 109–10 and 115–16; *1994*, pp. 111–12 and 117–18; and *1996*, pp. 116–17 and 122–23.

TABLE 4–5
Syria's Agricultural Performance Compared with That of Other Middle Eastern Countries

	Average Annual Growth Rate (%)						*Average Annual Growth of Population %*		*Average Growth Rate of Food Production per Capita 1979–91 (1979–81 = 100)*
	GDP			*Agriculture*					
Country	*1965–73*	*1970–80*	*1980–91*	*1965–73*	*1970–80*	*1980–91*	*1970–80*	*1980–91*	
Syria[a]	6.2	9.9	2.6	−0.7	8.6	−0.6	3.3	3.3	−2.9
Egypt	3.8	9.5	4.8	2.6	2.8	2.4	2.1	2.5	1.1
Jordan	n.a.	n.a.	−1.5	n.a.	n.a.	8.1	3.7	4.7	−1.2
Iraq	4.4	12.1	n.a.	1.7	n.a.	n.a.	3.3	n.a.	n.a.
Iran	10.4	2.2	2.2	5.2	3.9	2.5	3.3	3.6	1.3
Turkey	6.5	5.9	5.0	2.5	3.4	3.0	2.3	2.3	−0.2
Israel[a]	9.6	4.8	3.7	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.7	2.2	−0.5

Sources: World Bank, *World Development Report*, *1986*, pp. 182–83; and *1993*, pp. 240–41, 244–45, and 288–89.

[a]GDP and its components are at purchaser values for 1970–1980 and 1980–1991.

between 1962 and 1965, inclined downward during 1966–1973—except in 1972, a year of bumper crops—was on a generally upward trend from 1974 to 1983, fell markedly in 1984, 1987, and 1989, and was again on the rise in the first half of the 1990s.

The average annual growth rate of agriculture for 1961–1965, as estimated by the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut, came to 3.5 percent. But this figure had admittedly a degree of upward bias because the preceding years 1958–1960 were years of severe drought.[30] Subsequently the rate slipped appreciably and, according to the World Bank, was −0.7 percent for 1965–1973, but during the period 1970–1980 shot up to 8.6 percent only to fall to −0.6 percent in 1980–1991. These figures are taken from Table 4–5, which also makes clear that in the years 1970–1980 Syria's agricultural performance compared favorably, but in the years 1965–1973 and 1979–1991 unfavorably, with that of most of its neighbors in terms of rate of growth, and in 1979–1991 also in terms of food production per capita. This may in part be attributed to its relatively high rate of population growth.

Apart from the inescapable influence of the weather—such as the ruinous effects of the drought of 1966 or of the floods of the spring of 1967—the decline of the agricultural growth trend in the years 1966–1973 is related in part to the strains and dislocations that attended the process of reorganizing property relations and the sharpening of agrarian reform in the second half of the 1960s. The period was also marked by two coups d'état. Moreover, investment by the government was directed toward such projects as the Euphrates dam and the building of roads or silos for storing seeds and cereals, which had no immediate impact on agricultural production and would yield returns only in the succeeding decade.[31] Over and above this, Syria fought two wars in this period—in 1967 and 1973—which entailed the diversion of funds for the enhancement of its defense capacity.

The comparatively high agricultural growth rate of the period 1974–1982 (Table 4–3) is in part a reflection of the deep impact of the oil boom of 1973–1981, which resulted not merely in buoyant prices for Syrian oil—the country's major export earner since 1974—and, by consequence, in an elevenfold increase in the planned state investment allocated to agriculture during 1976–1980 over the level of 1966–1970 or an almost fivefold increase over the level of 1971–1975 but also, ultimately, by visible and invisible ways in a marked improvement of the larger farmer's capacity to invest.[32] This happened through what economists would call the boom's "multiplier effect," that is, the economic chain reaction it set off.

The rise in the agricultural growth rate in the years 1991–1995 is largely explicable by the top priority that the government gave to investment in agriculture in its 1991–1995 Five-Year Plan, with the proclaimed aim of achieving "self-sufficiency" in the long run "in most farming products," its simultaneous increase of the official procurement prices of the main crops, allowing the producers a profit margin of between 50 and 70 percent, depending on the "strategic significance of the produce," and its encouragement by a 1988 decree of the

private sector to join with the state in mixed agricultural enterprises, by granting such enterprises a broad range of exemptions from taxes, customs duties, and standing trade and exchange control regulations.[33]

The related great increase in the degree of mechanization also contributed to the high agricultural growth rates of 1974–1982 and 1991–1995. As can be inferred from Table 4–6, between 1972 and 1995 the number of harvester-thresher combines in use more than doubled, that of tractor ploughs multiplied nearly sevenfold, and that of tractors with engines of 50 or more horsepower twelvefold. The level of mechanization is much higher in the Jezīrah, the Ghāb, and the plains of Aleppo, Ḥamāh, and Ḥimṣ than in the Ḥawrān or Jabal Druze, where land is split up into small fields or most of the soil is stony, thus impeding the use of tractors or reaping machines.[34] In some villages there is now little recollection of the old days when the land was tilled into shallow furrows with light wooden ploughs and the crop was harvested with sickles, threshed by sledges, and winnowed with forks. A good example is the village of Rableh, which lies on the Orontes River about 40 kilometers to the southwest of Ḥimṣ, and has only 7,000 inhabitants but boasts of as many as 1,500 agricultural tractors.[35]

TABLE 4–6
Progress in the Mechanization of Syrian Agriculture and the Use of Chemical Fertilizers and Insecticides

	1952	*1962*	*1972*	*1982*	*1995*
Number of modern machines used in cultivation					
Tractors					
Less than 50 h.p.	977	5,591	5,669	7,331	25,931
50 h.p. and more			4,705	28,202	56,672
Pumps drawing on river or underground water	n.a.	22,142	29,954	60,057	134,724
Modern (tractor) ploughs	n.a.	6,717	13,620	51,967	93,481
Harvester-thresher combines	453	1,557	1,429	2,958	3,719
Seeders	n.a.	n.a.	1,660	4,779	9,095
Chemical Fertilizers Used in Agriculture (thousands tons)	4.7	64.4	162.3	330.5	845.1
Insecticides (value in million Syrian pounds)	n.a.	1.2	n.a	20.6	855.6

Sources: 1952 and 1962 figures from Rizq-ul-Lah Haylān, *ath-Thaqāfah,* p. 191; Office Arabe de Presse et de Documentation, Damas, *Etude documentaire sur l'agriculture Syrienne* (Damascus, n.d.), p. 210; and U.N. Economic and Social Office in Beirut, "Past Development and Growth Prospects in the Agricultural Sector of Syria" (Beirut, April 1971, mimeo.), p. 30; 1972, 1982, and 1993 figures from Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract*, *1974*, p. 266; *1978*, p. 244; *1983*, pp. 153–54; *1994*, pp. 144 and 146, and *1996*, pp. 149; and 151.

In order to cope with the rising demand for modern machines and at the same time reduce the country's dependence on costly imports, the government set up during the first half of the 1970s, jointly with Motor Iberica, the Euphrates tractor factory near Aleppo, in which the Spanish company had a 25 percent stake. The factory is essentially an assembly plant, but in 1981 manufactured 15 percent of the tractor's parts, a proportion that would, it was hoped, be raised to eventually 55 percent. In the mid-1980s the plant had the capacity to assemble annually 4,200 tractors with an engine of 70 horsepower but, although it produced as many as 4,085 tractors in 1983, its production fell subsequently; between 1989 and 1992 it did not produce a single machine, and in 1993 only 401 tractors. For this no explanation has been given.[36] The Euphrates tractor sold at the factory for 51,143 Syrian pounds ($13,030) in 1983.[37] What individual farmers actually paid for it is not clear, but there has been some grumbling by them at the high cost of agricultural machinery, particularly after a 27 percent price increase in 1985.[38] On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that an American tractor of a power equivalent to that of the Euphrates tractor sold for $25,000 in the United States in 1983.[39] Moreover, in recent years the government in Syria has been offering to farmers who wish to purchase new machines 10-year loans at an interest of only 3 percent.[40]

Out of the 72,782 tractors used in cultivation in 1993, no fewer than 97 percent were privately owned, which is a reflection of the fact that the government is merely a planner and regulator of agricultural activity and only insignificantly engaged in actual production.

The agricultural growth rates of 1974–1982 and 1991–1995 (again consult Table 4–3) were made possible by other interrelated factors, not the least of which is the considerable expansion in the number of Syria's trained agriculturalists. This should be evident from Table 4–7. Under the Baʿthists two new agricultural colleges were established, one in Damascus in 1963 and the other in Latakia in 1972. An older college had been founded in Aleppo in 1960. No fewer than 3,793 Syrians graduated from these colleges between 1970 and 1993. The number of university-trained agronomists attached to the Peasants' General Union and its subordinate organizations rose from 118 in 1976, to 750 in 1985, and 815 in 1989.[41] In the country as a whole there were 10,896 agronomists at the end of 1986, including those attached to the Ministry of Agriculture.[42]

Many of these specialists no longer hang about in the capital or at provincial headquarters, as in the past. They have been progressively moved to the fields, where they work closely with farmers, offering them advice on the use of fertilizers, insecticides, or new varieties of crops, and working out production methods more in accord with the soil and climatic traits of their region.[43]

In fact, according to one U.N. expert, Syria has "one of the best" agricultural extension systems in the developing world.[44] In 1987 it had in the field about 600 extension units serviced by 44 support centers and manned by 1,012 male agronomists, 169 female agronomists, 292 agricultural supervisors, and 190 veterinary superintendents.[45] Each extension unit is responsible for 800 to 1,200

TABLE 4–7
Syria's Trainees in Agriculture and Animal Science in Selected Years

	1963	*1970*	*1975*	*1980*	*1985*	*1990*	*1993*
Number of students in agricultural and veterinary vocational schools	779	747	2,204	1,183	920	4,599	5,059
Number of graduates from preuniversity agricultural and veterinary schools	317	132	804	294		535	1,586
Agricultural Colleges							
Number of students	87	910	7,304	8,316	7,568	5,286	6,194
Number of graduates	n.a.	70	589	1,428	783	396	527
Veterinary college							
Number of students		46	793	1,188	1,035	1,331	1,646
Number of graduates		46	36	168	61	115	132
Central March Institute for Peasant Education							
Number of students			73	33	62	66	
Number of graduates			73	33	62	66	

Sources: Syria, *Statistical Abstracts* for various years

families, and is counted upon to cover 2,000 irrigated hectares or 8,000 rainfed hectares.[46] The extension workers are trained by specialists that have had an average of two and a half years' extension experience. To provide guidance to the farmers, 13,343 extension fields were set up between 1980 and 1990.[47] More extension units are being built, but the focus now is merely on irrigated areas or regions with high rainfall. However, even in these areas the extension staff is still far from enough compared to actual needs.

An impetus to the agricultural growth of 1974–1982 and 1991–1995 was also given by the wider use of chemical fertilizers and insecticides (consult Table 4–6). In the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, these elements were largely applied to cotton and sugar beet and seldom to the wheat or barley crops. Owing to its importance as a foreign exchange earner, cotton has since continued to receive high priority by the government with respect to all production requisites, except in some years during the oil boom or in times of depressed world prices for cotton. Sugar beet has benefited from a similar special consideration. When it is also kept in mind that cotton and sugar beet are grown in irrigated areas, it should be clear why the yields per hectare of both crops show much greater improvement over the years than those of wheat and barley (see Table 4–4), which are predominantly grown on dry lands.

In fact, in the first half of the 1980s the average yield per hectare of Syria's cotton was the third highest in the world.[48] The decline in this yield during 1966–1970 may in part be more apparent than real because there seems to have

been an overreporting by farmers of the area under cotton, its extent being tied to the amount of concessionary credit obtainable from the government.[49]

The marked drop in the yield from each hectare planted to barley since the 1940s (take another look at Table 4–4) is essentially the natural outcome of the extension of barley cultivation after the 1930s to less productive land or land with a less dependable or lower mean rainfall. But the relative neglect of barley by the government and the nonapplication of fertilizers or pesticides to the barley crop were also causative factors.

The same is true on the whole of wheat up to roughly 1975. Since that time there has been an increasing official preoccupation with this basic food crop. The progress in the use of fertilizers in wheat (and cotton) fields has subsequently been striking and was facilitated by the building at Ḥimṣ in 1972 of a calcium nitrate plant with a capacity of 125,000 tons, and in 1982 of the ammonia and urea fertilizer plant with a capacity of 360,000 tons of ammonia and 365,000 tons of urea, and of the phosphate fertilizer factory with a capacity of 450,000 tons. These plants did not operate at full capacity after 1982, however, partly because of rationing in electricity supplies and partly on account of the difficulty of importing spare parts for the plants due to scarce foreign exchange. Moreover, Syria still depends on imports for all its potassium needs.[50]

The high agricultural growth rate of 1974–1982 and 1991–1995 must also be attributed to the introduction of new plant strains that are higher yielding and more resistant to disease and dry conditions. The oldest indigenous wheat varieties are the Ḥawrānī, a hard grain grown in the Ḥawrān plains and the Damascus province, which in the past held pride of place; the hard Ḥamarī, grown in other parts of the country; and the Salamūnī, a soft brown wheat from which are made the large round, thin, paperlike flatbreads called shīrāk in some areas, generally eaten by the peasants. The only variety of barley that appears to have originated in Syria is the ʿArabī, a hard, well-nourished grain of a grayish-white color; but the best quality of barley produced in the past was the soft, creamy-white, long-in-grain Rūmī (Byzantine).[51]

During the French Mandate the hard, high-yielding Prieur barley seed and the Dūshānī, a soft wheat of French origin, were introduced. Later other imported strains, like the Sicilian wheat seed known as Senator Capelli, were used or experimentally tested.[52] In the 1970s considerable success was achieved with improved varieties of soft Mexican wheat. In fact, in several provinces—in districts with irrigation or an average annual rainfall of more than 400 mm. or 15.7 inches—the sowing of 80 percent of the wheat areas with these high-yielding varieties became mandatory.[53] In the first half of the 1980s, thanks to the close cooperation of Syria's scientists with the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas, a new durum (hard) wheat (Shām 1) and a new bread wheat (Shām 2) were released to Syrian farmers. Both grains give greater yields than existing varieties.[54]

As regards cotton, Egyptian and American strains were used and intercrossed with local plants. In the 1970s new varieties, Aleppo 1 and Aleppo 40, were introduced and gave good results.[55]

Barley has only recently received close attention. The development of the Euphrates 1113 strain in the 1980s brought rewards: its yield has been 27 percent higher than the local white barley variety.[56]

Finally, in any consideration of the elements that directly or indirectly influenced the rise of the agricultural growth rate in the period 1974–1982 and 1991–1995, it is necessary not to overlook the significance of such factors as the political alliance between the government and the landed peasants, village electrification, the selective improvement of roads, favorable pricing policies, the expansion of rural schools and health clinics, and the general enhancement of the farmers' well-being.

It is now time to account for the negative agricultural growth rate of the middle 1980s. One obvious factor is the chaotic weather patterns: a devastating drought in 1984 and out-of-season rains, frost, and hot winds in 1987.[57] Even more crucial was the precipitous plunge of world oil prices and the ensuing decline in Syria's receipts from its oil exports and in the flow into its economy of remittances from migrant Syrians laboring in the Gulf. This, combined with the swings in the price of cotton in the international market, the sharp decrease (from $1.5 billion in 1981 to $610 million in 1985) in the official development grants and loans made on concessional financial terms to Syria by all sources and the attendant shortage of foreign exchange and deterioration in the value of the Syrian pound against hard currencies, impeded Syria's development projects and significantly reduced its ability to import the machinery, spare parts, animal feed ingredients, fertilizers, and pesticides needed for the progress of its agriculture or animal husbandry.[58]

These setbacks cannot conceal from view the real gains made by Syria in the various areas of agricultural development and highlighted in the foregoing pages. At the same time, it is necessary to throw into sharp relief that in the early 1970s—as may be deduced from Table 4–8—Syria became, and would remain until the end of 1990, a net importer of agricultural products. To put it differently, its consumption in those years exceeded its production of food. As may also be inferred from the same table, its overall average yearly agricultural deficit in dollar terms or excess of agricultural imports over exports quadrupled in 1976–1980 over the level of 1971–1975 and increased 1.5-fold again in 1981–1985. The causes are obvious: depressed contemporary world prices for cotton, the country's principal agricultural export; a high demographic growth (3.3 percent in 1970–1991; see Table 4–5); greater urbanization (49.2 percent of Syria's households were urban in 1981 and only 38.7 percent in 1960);[59] a rise in living standards (per capita income increased from 853 Syrian pounds in 1963 to 7,307 Syrian pounds in 1984 at current prices,[60] or twofold in terms of the constant prices of 1980);[61] and, by consequence, a surge in per capita consumption of agricultural products and in the demand not only for basic staples but also for luxury foods.

However, the average yearly agricultural deficit narrowed markedly in 1986–1990 and appears to have turned into a surplus in 1991–1995. This was due to

TABLE 4–8

Value of Syria's Total Foreign Trade in Current Prices, the Percentile Share of Its Trade in Agricultural Products, and, for Comparative Purposes, the Share of Crude Oil and Oil Products in the Total Value of Its Exports 1963–1995

Period	*Total Imports Yearly Average $ Million*	*% Share of Agricultural Imports*	*Total Exports Yearly Average $ Million*	*% Share of Agricultural Exports*	*% Share of Raw Cotton in Total Exports*	*% Share of Oil and Oil Products in Total Exports*
1963–1965	227	26.9	177	91.5	47.4	—
1966–1970	319	25.1	183	79.8	40.2	6.9
1971–1975	915	30.0	517	38.7	25.3	46.5
1976–1980	2,981	18.0	1,385	20.6	13.6	63.4
1981–1985	4,336	20.8	1,908	14.9	9.2	67.5
1986–1990	2,368	20.2[a]	2,254	9.0[a]	4.5	44.4[b]
1991–1995	4,106	6.9[c]	3,445	14.1[c]	5.0	60.0

Sources: Based on figures in *FAO Trade Yearbook*, various issues, except for years 1986–1990 and 1990–1993 and for the percentage shares of raw cotton and petroleum in total exports, which are based on figures in Syria, *Statistical Abstracts* for various years.

Note: Trade in agricultural products includes trade in fishery and forestry products.

[a]Based on figures for 1986 and 1988–1990.

[b]In the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s the export of textiles increased considerably, ranking second after petroleum and petroleum products.

[c]Based on figures for 1991, 1993, and 1995.

the emphasis laid upon investment in agriculture in both the 1986–1990 and 1991–1995 Five Year Plans; the easing of restrictions on private agricultural enterprise; and the decisions by the government in 1990 to pay agriculturalists international prices for wheat, and in 1992 to exempt agricultural profits from taxation.[62] According to the Syrian press, in 1992 Syria achieved self-sufficiency in wheat, fruits, and vegetables. Nevertheless, as late as 1991 the country produced only 71.4 percent of all the grains it required.[63]

Possible Lines of Future Progress

Further improvements in Syria's agriculture are obviously still needed, the more so as the growth in population is expected to remain high in the decades ahead.

One way forward is through a higher level of mechanization, particularly on the farms owned by small peasants. In this regard a serious obstacle is raised by the fragmented ownership of lands. In 1980, 74.6 percent of all agricultural holdings were under 10 hectares.[64] Unfortunately, there are no up-to-date official figures on land distribution. There is little doubt, however, that by the mid-1990s the percentage of such holdings decreased, but not by much. For the use of tractors, the optimum farm size from the standpoint of efficiency is far larger than the extent of most of the small holdings. To cope with this problem, the Syrian leadership has been looking toward tajmīʿ, that is, the consolidation of small into large units of exploitation without infringing on ownership rights. The implementation of this policy on a modest scale has already begun in the reclaimed areas in the Euphrates River basin.[65]

By reducing costs, tajmīʿ may also result in the propagation of other elements of the new technology, that is, in the more extensive use of fertilizers, pesticides, and high-quality seeds and, it is hoped, in the spread of such practices as crop rotation, drip irrigation, and better management of water. In this regard, agricultural cooperatives are slated to play a major role. It is necessary, however, not to overlook the long-term effects of the wider application of fertilizers and pesticides. In the United States, for example, the use of pesticides had as early as the 1970s attained a level that environmentalists perceived as dangerous.[66]

Other possible lines of agricultural improvement must include a further advance in the process of dispensing with the practice of fallowing land, a more efficient control of irrigation and drainage systems, a better monitoring on private wells, a closer attention to animal breeding and the production of feed grains, a refinement of planning methods, an increase in the country's capacity for research, a better correlation in the efforts of specialists and farmers, greater incentives to growers, a more expeditious delivery of inputs and technical services by the government and, in general, an unrelenting struggle against the sluggishness of the bureaucracy.

Ultimately, a great deal depends upon the government's ability to ameliorate its financial situation and to engage local and Arab monetary resources, and

especially the surplus capital of Syrians active abroad, part of which has found its way into neighboring Turkey, Cyprus, and Jordan. In an all-out bid to attract these resources, the government passed Decree No. 10 of February 26, 1986, setting guidelines for joint agricultural ventures between the public sector and Syrian and Arab investors. Under this decree the ventures will be tax-free for seven years after achieving profitability. Their production requisites will be exempt from all import and currency restrictions. They will also be entitled to retain 70 percent of their foreign exchange earnings. Shareholders from Arab countries or who are Syrian expatriates will have the right to transfer their profits abroad in hard currency. According to a more recent regulation, this transfer will be made on the basis of the "promotional" rate of exchange established in September 1986. In 1994 this rate was 22 Syrian pounds to one U.S. dollar. By contrast, the official exchange rate has been since January 1, 1988, only 11.25 Syrian pounds to one dollar. Under Decree No. 10 the public sector's share of the equity in any joint-venture agricultural company should not be less than 25 percent and that of any individual not more than 5 percent.[67] So far seven such companies have been founded. Whether Decree No. 10 will elicit a wider response among Arab and Syrian investors remains to be seen.

Although, because of Turkey's southeast Anatolia projects—on one occasion Turkey diverted the Euphrates River for one whole month to fill the Ataturk dam[68]—the amount of water in the Euphrates available to Syria is expected to decline sharply in the next decade, the outlook for the country's agriculture is far from disheartening. For one thing, the judicious use of water and the upgrading of agricultural productivity are high priorities for the current Five Year Plan. Under the earlier plan, the water of the Euphrates was already being used to irrigate the fertile plains to the north and south of Aleppo rather than the bad-quality land to the east, as in the past.[69] Moreover, as was noted earlier, Syria has attained self-sufficiency in wheat, fruits, and vegetables.

Syria still has some distance to go before it can catch up with the sustenance capacity of its own remote past: the recently discovered tablets of Ebla—now a hillock forty-two miles to the southwest of Aleppo but in the third millennium B.C. the center of a kingdom that embraced the whole of northern Syria—revealed that in the villages surrounding Ebla no fewer than seventeen varieties of wheat were raised, and that Ebla was in a condition to feed more than 18 million people.[70] This capacity appears, however, to have stemmed in part from its commercial dominance of the entire area of the Fertile Crescent.

CHAPTER 5

Introduction: Portraits of Peasants by Ibn Khaldūn, Balzac, Trotsky, Father Ayrout, and J. C. Scott, and Their Relevance

Were Syria's peasants in the centuries preceding ours a dead weight politically? Why are the references to them in Islamic literature—an urban body of books—so rare and, with very few exceptions, insubstantial? Did their geographic dispersion, their isolated mode of life, their want of learning, and the lack of links or mutual dealings between them, other than on a local or regional basis, condemn them to political helplessness and obscurity?

It may not be inappropriate to enter into this subject with the few observations on the peasantry made by Ibn Khaldūn (1332—1406), who reflected on almost every aspect of medieval Islamic civilization. People who live by agriculture, he affirmed, are distinguished by the abjectness or lowness of their condition. In support of this view he adduces a saying attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad. On seeing a plowshare in the house of one of his Medinan followers, the Prophet reportedly exclaimed: "Such a tool does not enter any one's abode unless accompanied by abjectness." Ibn Khaldūn traces the roots of this condition to the imposts or other compulsory contributions levied on the peasants, the detriment sustained by them in their possessions, and their fall under the yoke of overbearing power. From his standpoint, their payment of taxes or imposts which, unless threatened by destruction, "proud hearts" would not bear, is itself a sign of weakness and ultimately explicable by the erosion or loss of their ʿaṣabiyyah or group feeling and, therefore, of their ability to defend themselves or advance their interests. "Abjectness" in turn generates in them the qualities of "cunning and deceit." For this Ibn Khaldūn invokes again the authority of the Prophet. Having—it is related—denounced imposts, Muḥammad went on to say: "A person who has to pay imposts tells lies and makes a promise and breaks it."[1]

It is striking how similar some of the elements in the image of the tillers of the soil that emerges from Ibn Khaldūn's analysis are to the portrait that Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) painted of the French peasants of his day. Balzac, of course, was a writer of novels and satires, but one from whose interpretation of French society—marked by dramatic exaggeration as it may be—a no lesser historical figure than Friedrich Engels admitted to have "learned more than from all the professed historians, economists, and statisticians of the period together."[2] In *Les Paysans*, the trait that Balzac consistently associates with the peasants is "cunning." Old Fourchon, the principal rustic character in the novel, is depicted as "the king of sly-boots." In him "Machiavelism reaches an incred-

ible pitch." But Fourchon is not represented as singular: he is merely the chief type of a class. In Balzac's view, the peasants are "near relations" to "savages" and, like savages, "never make use of articulate speech, except to lay traps for their enemies."[3] Their enemies are the rich, for whom they bear a "deeply rooted" hatred. But they do not fight them face to face. They frustrate them insidiously and by indirect means—by "underhand" or "clever" thieving or pilfering, by encroaching "little by little" on their properties, pasturing their cows on their meadows or helping themselves to wood when watchmen or foresters are not around, and by other "frauds useful to the needy" invented at the local tavern. Their cheerless poverty is "their *raison d'état*." All this is clinched by Balzac with the dictum: "An entirely honest and well-conducted peasant is an exception to his class."[4]

It is necessary to keep in mind that in *Les Paysans* the French novelist is portraying, in his own manner, peasants who had been enfranchised by the French Revolution but who were still, in the words of old Fourchon, "penned up like sheep" in their villages, now no longer by the nobles but by "the force of circumstances." More than that, they had, as before, "to sweat their lives out," losing "the best part" of what they made, this time to the tax collector, and ending as they had been, "in rags."[5]

Balzac leaves us in no doubt as to the side on which his sympathies were engaged. Unlike Ibn Khaldūn, who stemmed from an old patrician lineage, Balzac, despite the nobiliary particle before his surname, was born to a middle-class family that had recently risen from the ranks of the peasantry. But his affections were all for the nobles, even though he did not hesitate to hold them up to ridicule. At any rate, *Les Paysans* is unambiguously a powerful political assault on the peasants written with the explicit intent of exposing what he described as their "permanent conspiracy" against the rich—their reduction of private property by biting it away little by little and unremittingly, to "something that at once is and is not."[6]

The characterization of the Russian peasants by Leon Trotsky and that of the Egyptian peasants by Father H. H. Ayrout bear some resemblance to Balzac's portrayal of the French peasants. Referring to the conduct of the muzhik during the first phase of the Russian Revolution of 1917, Trotsky—who of course upheld the cause of the working class—remarked in 1930: "'You won't get [the land] by being good,' says the muzhik to himself, 'and force is dangerous—let's try foxiness.'"[7] The terms used by Father Ayrout in 1938 in regard to the fellah were comparable: "Like all weak people, the fellah practices cunning to the point of duplicity. He knows how to conceal his joy, his suffering, or his crime. . . . In his ruses and dodges, when he leaves it to time to decide, when he agrees without any intention of acting upon his word, when he uses ambiguous or evasive language, or purposely misunderstands—he shows great adaptability."[8]

Balzac's view of the peasants left a clear imprint on an interesting thesis by James C. Scott, which he develops in his thoughtful study of a Malay village, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance.* Scott starts from

the premise that through most of history the peasants, as an underclass, have seldom been granted "the luxury of open, organized political activity." He also underlines the fact that for them outright rebellions are fraught with peril, if not self-destructive, and are in any case "few and far between" and, even if successful, lead more likely than not to consequences out of their reckoning. On these grounds Scott argues that it is more significant to focus on the typical forms of peasant political behavior, namely, on their "prosaic" but relentless *everyday* resistance against those who seek to draw from them by force or contrivance "labor, food, taxes, rents, and interest." In this struggle, the weapons of the peasants are the weapons of the weak—"foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage." These forms of class resistance, Scott concludes, demand no coordination, characteristically hold back from any direct defiance of authority, and are "the most effective" in the long run.[9]

In terms of their traits of political behavior or their forms of political expression, are Syria's peasants recognizable in any of these images drawn by Ibn Khaldūn, Balzac, Trotsky, Ayrout, or James C. Scott?

A point made in Chapter 2 bears reemphasis here: Syria's peasants do not constitute one but several social types. To be more concrete, as regards political conduct, it is necessary to distinguish between the "peasant-gardeners" and the "agricultural peasants," the peasants of warrior extraction or the peasant-mountaineers and the more pliant peasants of the open plains, the clanless peasants and the peasants with strong clan ties, the landed and landless peasants, the peasants who had come under the influence of ṣūfī or mystic ideas or the peasants who belong to secretive sects and to whom the belief of religious dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) had special significance and the peasants with no such ideas or beliefs or affiliations. Obviously, all these different peasants cannot be lumped together or assumed a priori to behave politically in the same fashion.

CHAPTER 6

The First Peasant Organizations or the Corporations of Peasant-gardeners from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century

THE ORCHARDISTS or peasant-gardeners (*al-basātinah*) were the first peasants to enjoy the possibilities or advantages of occupational combination. In the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries—if not in earlier times—in the Ghūṭah of Damascus they were organized into a guild (*ṭā'ifah*) under their own chief (*shaykh al-basātinah*). Their counterparts who tended the Aleppo gardens watered by the Quwayq River—and, probably, those who cared for the gardens along the Orontes in the Ḥimṣ, Ḥamāh, and Antioch regions—were similarly incorporated in the same period.[1] Their organizational ties were in essence local ties rather than ties on the scale of the whole of Syria or the Ottoman Empire. Their guild formed one of 163 or so corporations that had recourse in the centuries just mentioned to the sharī'ah or Islamic law courts of Damascus or Aleppo for the investiture of their shaykh or his dismissal, or for the settlement of disputes within the guild or between the guild and the state or the inhabitants or other associations.[2]

The Ghūṭah guild of peasant-gardeners, which appears to have been anchored largely on unwritten practice, was clearly linked to the Damascus guild structure described by Elias Qudsī in 1882 and shared the features characteristic of its constituent units.[3] From the sketch Qudsī provided it is reasonable to infer that the Damascene guilds were more or less self-governing mutual support associations, each with its prescribed standards and customs and its own hierarchy of shaykh, elders, rank-and-file members, and apprentices, and all headed by a shaykh-al-mashāyikh, who, it would appear, was a man of considerable power prior to the Ottoman "reforms" of the nineteenth century known as the Tanḍhīmāt. As a rule, the shaykh of each guild was elected by a consensus of the opinions of the elders of the profession. However, in some guilds the office was hereditary in the same family but subject to the approval of the candidate by the guild's elders. The corporate bond was so strong that the members of the guild not merely regarded the initiates as their brethren but "under certain circumstances" gave them "preference over [their] natural brothers."[4]

Much controversy surrounds the origins of this structure. Qudsī himself maintained—without giving any reference—that in its essential features it had remained unaltered from "ancient times," even though it acquired in the Islamic period a religious purpose that it originally lacked.[5] But Louis Massignon—without providing any conclusive supporting evidence—linked the emergence of the Muslim guilds to the rise in the ninth century of the Qarmathians (al-

Qarāmiṭah), a revolutionary ultra-Shīʿī movement with egalitarian leanings named after Ḥamdān Qarmaṭ, a villager from Iraq. Massignon also held that the tenth to the twelfth centuries formed the guilds' "great period of liberty."[6] For his part, Bernard Lewis suggests that their "forms of organization" were possibly of Byzantine origin, but adds that the Qarmathians gave the guilds "a new élan" and left "a deep and lasting imprint in their inner life."[7] In this regard it is perhaps relevant to mention the reference by the Muslim historian al-Masʿūdī (c. 893–956) to the conversion of most of the peasants of the Damascus Ghūṭah to Qarmathian beliefs in the early part of the tenth century.[8] However, the Qarmathian origin of the guilds or the existence in medieval Islamic society of guilds, in the sense of voluntary, "spontaneous," or autonomous professional associations for self-protection and the pursuit of economic interests, were questioned by Claude Cahen and S. M. Stern.[9] Similarly, Ira M. Lapidus has denied that there were associations of this kind in Damascus, Aleppo, or Cairo in the Mamlūk period, that is, between 1250 and 1517. Such embryonic forms as existed were, from his standpoint, mere creations by the state for "its own purposes."[10] Concurring with these views, Gabriel Baer took pains to emphasize that the impulse for the development of the guild system in the seventeenth century into a "comprehensive framework" for the organization of townsmen came from the Ottoman government, at least in Turkey and Egypt. He also expressed the opinion that the Damascus guilds were "unique" in the relative autonomy they appear to have enjoyed and, as units of Ottoman state control and taxation, were not as significant as their counterparts in such Near Eastern cities as Cairo or Istanbul.[11] However, the careful researches into Islamic court registers made by both ʿAbdul-Karīm Rāfeq and Bruce Masters clearly reveal that the Aleppo guilds were also voluntary in character and enjoyed "a great deal of autonomy."[12]

At any rate, it is quite certain that the guild here at issue, that of al-basātinah or peasant-gardeners, had the ability to protect its members and further their interests not only in the oasis of Damascus but also in the garden region of Aleppo. Thus in 1617 the Aleppan gardeners' guild, on being pressed by the muḥtasib or superintendent of markets—a state official—to set a price on cauliflower and cabbage, appealed to the qāḍī—the judge appointed by the Ottoman Porte—pleading that such a requirement or the fixing of prices in the court were contrary to habitual practice. The judge agreed with the peasant-gardeners and ordered the muḥtasib not to interfere with them.[13]

Moreover, there is indirect evidence that, at least in the eighteenth century, the peasant-gardeners played a role in the political life of Aleppo. This can be inferred from the fact that the "tenants" of the Aleppo gardens were "often" ashrāf or Janissaries, as is clear from the contemporary pages of Alexander Russell, a physician and a long-time resident of the city.[14] The ashrāf, or claimants of descent from the Prophet, and the Janissaries, or members of the standing infantry corps, constituted the two major political factions into which the Muslim inhabitants of Aleppo were and would remain split well into the first third of the nineteenth century, when the power of both factions was effectively broken.[15]

It is possible that most of the gardeners-ashrāf were ashrāf only in name by dint of the apparent tendency of the ashrāf to incorporate into their ranks people who were absolute strangers to the family of the Prophet in the hope of fortifying themselves politically. Similarly the gardeners-Janissaries may not have been real soldiers. In the words of Volney, the Janissaries of Aleppo were in the middle of the 1780s "only a crowd of artisans and peasants" but "infinitely less tractable" than the rest of these classes: "When a Pasha abuses his authority, they are always the first to erect the standard of sedition."[16]

The presence of peasant-gardeners in the ranks of both ashrāf and Janissaries could be interpreted in one of two ways. Either the members of their guild did not act politically in concert or, as is more likely, some ran with the ashrāf and others held with the Janissaries in the hope that, irrespective of the outcome of the recurring conflicts between the two factions, there would always be peasant-gardeners on the right side to defend the interests of the guild as a whole.

In Damascus, where the ashrāf as a group were much less of a political factor, the peasant-gardeners appear to have had a foothold in the Janissary corps. However, evidence for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries points to many bona fide Janissaries acquiring or tenanting gardens in the oasis of Damascus.[17] The reverse process of peasant-gardeners enrolling in the corps was probably also at work, but after 1660 they could only have joined the Yerliyya, the local Janissaries who, in a sense, defended local or regional interests and became increasingly at odds with the imperial Janissaries, the Kapi Kulus.[18]

It is not clear to what extent the guilds of peasant-gardeners were affected by the involvement in the nineteenth century of Syria's guilds in two adverse processes—the deepening European economic penetration and the tendency of the Ottoman state to attract to itself the elements of power hitherto diffused among local emīrs, aghas, tribal shaykhs, and corporate orders. That these processes bore hard on the artisanal guilds is evident from verses their naqīb or marshal recited in 1882 and earlier years during the artisans' initiation ceremony. "Messenger of God," the naqīb read imploringly, "I am reduced to straits; the afflictions of fortunes are heavy and hope is extinguished. . . . Messenger of God, I beg earnestly for your help . . . for times are inimical."[19]

In an economic sense, however, the peasant-gardeners do not appear to have shared the unhappy lot of many of the artisans. It is true that the fortunes of these classes were to some extent intertwined: the Ghūṭah, for example, supplied raw materials to the handicraftsmen of Damascus, such as hemp to the string and rope makers, walnut wood to the manufacturers of ornamental furniture, and fruits—especially apricots—to confectioners. But these elements of the artisanate did not suffer as seriously from the intrusion of cheap machine-made European goods as did the cotton spinners or weavers of cotton fabrics. It is also true that, because of the close links between the Ghūṭah and Damascus, the peasant-gardeners could not but have felt the detrimental effect on the Damascene economy of the advent of steam navigation on the Mediterranean in the 1840s, the shift of the commercial center of gravity from the interior to the coast, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the loss of much of the overland

Muslim pilgrimage traffic and trans-desert transit trade, and the insolvency in the 1870s of the Damascene provincial treasury.[20]

On the other hand, the peasant-gardeners, especially the owners of the gardens among them—who were numerous in the Ghūṭah villages closest to Damascus—must have eventually benefited, in direct or indirect ways, from such developments as the extension of the Ottoman telegraphic network to Damascus in 1859 and Aleppo in 1862; the building of practicable and safe roads in several regions of Syria, including the Damascus-Beirut carriage route in the first third of the 1860s; the linking by rail of Damascus to Beirut in 1895, to Ḥimṣ, Ḥamāh, and Aleppo through Rayāq between 1903 and 1906, and to the Ḥawrān and Medina between 1901 and 1908; the establishment of a more or less effective system of rural police and of a chain of regular garrisons along the edges of the Syrian Desert, and the ensuing enhancement of security in the countryside and the virtual suppression of the recurrent practice by intractable bedouin shaykhs of tolling every garden or holding of land.[21]

Suggestive of the increasing revenue of the propertied—and perhaps share-cropping—peasant-gardeners of the Ghūṭah is the threefold rise of the annual average price of fruit and the more than twofold rise of vegetable prices in Damascus between 1891 and 1906.[22] A similar inference can be drawn from the expansion in the area covered with apricot trees in the years prior to World War I and the growth in the export from the Damascus region of apricot paste from an annual average of about £17,500 in 1887–1888 to an annual average of £28,500 in the same years.[23] The apricot kernels were valued in foreign markets, especially in Marseilles and Hamburg, for the prussic acid they contained. The apricot paste, locally known as *qamar-ud-dīn*, was made in the orchards by the peasant-gardeners themselves; they withdrew the stones, worked up the fruit to the appropriate consistency, laid out the derived sheets of paste on boards, and kept them under trees until they fully dried, whereupon the sheets were rolled up with care and eventually carried into the city for sale to exporters and other regular dealers. The paste was by and large consumed in Syria, but substantial quantities were sent out to Egypt and various parts of the Ottoman domain.[24]

The relative well-being of the peasant-gardeners may explain why their corporation was still active in the interwar period, even though its membership had much diminished. In 1927, the year of the birth of the modern trade union movement in Syria—when out of the 71,720 constituting the economically active population of Damascus, only 7,526 or, according to another count, 7,733, that is, no more than 10.8 percent, were enrolled in the traditional guilds—the corporation of peasant-gardeners was one of the "free" as distinguished from "official" corporations that was "regularly accredited" by the municipality, and included in its ranks the khuḍariyyah or vegetable vendors.[25] Its last chief, Muḥammad Saʿīd Agha Shaykh al-Basātinah, tended his own garden in al-ʿAdawī, a garden extension of Sūq Sarūjah, one of the old quarters of Damascus. When disputes arose between peasant-gardeners, Saʿīd Agha was their habitual recourse. With his death in 1930 the office lapsed and the corporation

faded away.[26] In Ḥimṣ its counterpart was still functioning under its own shaykh as late as 1951, and comprised no fewer than 4,000 members.[27]

The long organizational experience of the peasant-gardeners undoubtedly accounts for their marked ability to protect their interests or resist the arbitrariness or importunities of tax farmers or tax collectors—a characteristic that sets them apart from most other peasants. The propertied in their ranks showed particular success in safeguarding the ancient water rights attached to their gardens. But this may also be explicable by the greater incidence of literacy among them: in the Ghūṭah many were graduates of an old Qurʾānic school at Dūmā or of the Ottoman civil higher elementary (*rushdiye*) school established there in 1911.[28] Dūmā, which lies 14 kilometers northeast of Damascus and is said to have been, before the advent of Islam, the site of a Christian monastery and a settlement of the Arab Christian tribe of Banī Taghlib, was still a village in 1911 with a population of about 7,000, but is now one of the largest towns in the Damascus oasis and includes more than 150,000 inhabitants.[29]

It is also noteworthy that the ancient, highly intricate network of irrigation channels running off the Barada River at varying levels through the Ghūṭah orchards prompted the propertied peasant-gardeners to take frequent counsel with one another and assisted the progress of democratic practices among them, which found expression in their villages' councils of elders. As a rule, they settled their differences within these councils or by appeal to their guild or their chief and avoided recourse to the government, if possible.

The peasant-gardeners have consistently been among the most enterprising of Syria's peasants. In the interwar and post-World War II years, if not earlier, many of the entrepreneurs or speculators, who in the Ghūṭah went by the name of dammānīn, stemmed from the class of well-to-do peasant-gardeners.[30] The dammānīn purchased for a fixed sum the fruit crop while on the trees and organized at their expense gathering, packing, and transport operations.

One related fact is sufficiently interesting to be thrown into sharp relief: the earliest of the Baʿthists of the Ghūṭah, Khālid al-Ḥakīm, a founding member and leader in 1946 of the Baʿth party branch at Dūmā and president in 1963–1964 of the General Federation of Labor Unions, sprang from a family of peasant-gardening dammānīn turned truck proprietors.[31]

It is also significant that the first peasant-oriented political party, the Arab Socialist party—whose leading nucleus came to life in 1943 at Ḥamāh under the central slogan *Hātū al-Quffah wa-l-Kurēk Linaʿsh al-Āgha wa-l-Bēk* (Fetch the Basket and the Shovel for the Burying of the Agha and the Bey) drew its basic force in Ḥamāh proper from the peasant-gardeners of the quarter of al-ʿUlayliyyāt, which in Ottoman times lay outside the city's walls.[32]

CHAPTER 7

Ṣūfism among the Peasants: A Source of Political Quietism?

Prior to World War I, Ṣūfism loomed large in the life of many of Syria's peasants. No other movement played a greater role in the shaping of their beliefs and values. Unfortunately, its ideological impact in the countryside has never been closely studied. Direct references in the existing sources to the strength of the mystic fraternities as rural organizing forces or to their living ties with the peasants are very rare, and the relevant evidence is so thin that only a fragmentary picture can be drawn.

Ṣūfism eludes definition, being a movement with varied aspects and many different impulses and passions. It had its sober and tolerant phases and its wild and fanatic moments. It was at odds or in harmony with "orthodox" Islam, depending upon the forms it assumed or the sufferance or degeneration of the "orthodox" establishment. In some periods it nourished and buttressed the dominant faith, but in other times weakened and vulgarized it. It had its pious and idealistic men and its charlatans, magic workers, and serpent charmers. It inspired contentment, passivity, and fatalism but at certain junctures challenged authority and spurred men to rebellion. In its higher manifestations it rejected worldliness and endeavored to keep away from the minds of its adherents every thought except that of a supreme supernatural being, detaching them from any self-seeking emotion, but it frequently bent human weaknesses to its purposes and sought and amassed power and riches. It is in its more undisciplined and eccentric forms that it took root among the peasants, and it was undoubtedly a salient factor in the spread in the countryside of new—or the reinforcement of old pre-Islamic—superstitions such as the belief in charms, magic, and miracles. It also promoted devotion to the awliyāʾ or "friends of God," investing them with an aura of sanctity and turning their tombs into objects of veneration and centers for pilgrimage.

The thought and experience of Ṣūfism came into bloom in the age of its early inspirers and masters: among others, Rābiʿah al-ʿAdawiyyah (c. 717–801), a freed slave and woman mystic from Baṣrah; al-Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī (781–857), also a Baṣrite and the first of the prominent Ṣūfī authors; Dhū-n-Nūn al-Miṣrī—the Egyptian (d. 860), the originator of the notion of wajd or ecstasy of love as the only way to reach knowledge of God; Bāyazīd al-Bistāmī (d. 875), a Persian, the foremost of the "intoxicated" Ṣūfīs, and the exponent of the idea of fanāʾ or the obliteration of the self in God; al-Junayd (d. 910) of Baghdād, the elaborator of a comprehensive mystic system; and the Persian al-Ḥallāj, who suffered cruel death in 922 for his pantheism.

In that age Ṣūfism had not yet assumed an organized form. Ṣūfī teachers carried on, each in his own way. Such circles of devotees as came to form around them were of a transient character and the links between these circles were feeble or irregular. But before long Ṣūfī schools emerged, and the twelfth century witnessed the rise of the self-perpetuating Ṣūfī orders. This process was perhaps assisted by the classical formulation of Ṣūfī beliefs by al-Qushayrī (d. 1074) and the success of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī (1058–1111) in reconciling Ṣūfī doctrine with Islamic law and Sunnī theology. Later on, the prolific and distinguished literary production of Muḥyī-Dīn ibn ʿArabī (1165–1240) gave the movement a further impetus.

The Ṣūfī orders eventually gained hold on the mind of the common people, including the peasantry, and would continue to show vigor to a lesser or greater degree until the nineteenth century, when they began to suffer gradual institutional decay—interrupted at intervals by spells of transitory revival—in an ideological atmosphere increasingly dominated by puritan reformists and, to a lesser extent and much later, by skeptical secularists.[1]

In a generalization about Muslim society that appears to refer to the period between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, Hamilton A. R. Gibb maintained that "each village community . . . had its Ṣūfī lodge."[2] In a more specific reference to Ottoman Syria of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Antoine ʿAbdel Nour observed that "the least village had . . . often a *zāwiyah*," that is, an oratory that served as a center for the activities of Ṣūfī devotees.[3] Neither Gibb nor ʿAbdel Nour bolstered his assertion with the needed evidence. More than that, according to an eighty-year-old leader of the Ṣūfī Rifāʿī order, Shaykh ʿAbd-ul-Ḥakīm ʿAbd-ul-Bāsiṭ (Abū Fahd) as-Saqbānī, a native of Saqbā, a village east of Damascus, there were oratories of this kind only "in some villages," as in Jisrīn and Qaraḥtā in the Ghūṭah and in Ḥīsh and Kfar Sajnah north of Ḥamāh.[4] In most of the villages in which Ṣūfī orders were active, Ṣūfī meetings were held in the guest room of the house of the foremost local Ṣūfī, the muqaddam, who formed an intermediate link between the adepts and the higher-ranking, city-residing murshid or spiritual guide and ṣāḥib as-sajjādah, that is, the shaykh occupying the "prayer-carpet" of the founder of the order.

In the first half of this century there was no visible sign of Ṣūfī presence in the tribal or relatively recently established villages. In a remark relating to northwest Syria in the middle 1950s, Louise E. Sweet, an anthropologist, pointed out that there were no Ṣūfī fraternities in the villages east of the Ḥamāh-Aleppo highway, that is, in the tribal villages that had been settled in the nineteenth century or subsequently, and that the presence of such fraternities was "probably" correlative with the "old peasant villages" located to the west of the highway. She added, however, that "a weekly meeting" of a Ṣūfī order was held "within travel range" of the tribal villages in the Tell Ṭoqān area in which she did her research.[5] Such a meeting was chiefly devoted to the collective performance of the dhikr, an ecstatic exercise in which the adepts commemorated God with phrases prescribed by their order. But the meeting was

also a tension-mitigating occasion: some of the adepts or lay followers would stay after the end of the exercise to discuss village problems with the muqaddam or the elders.[6]

Of the Ṣūfī orders active in Syria, the Rifāʿiyyah proved especially powerful among the peasants. Its founder, Aḥmed ar-Rifāʿī (d. 1183) was himself a native of a village—Qaryat Ḥasan in the district of Baṣrah—and earned his livelihood by cutting or gathering wood or doing various odd jobs.[7] His own mystical activities appear to have been essentially oriented toward the peasants: they were seemingly limited to the southern Iraqi village of Umm ʿAbīdah and other villages in its neighborhood.[8] Characteristically enough, the ʿahd or initiatory covenant that the murīd or novice took on being admitted to the Rifāʿī order committed him to be, among other things, "assiduous in the service of the *fuqarāʾ* as far as possible."[9] In Ṣūfī parlance, the term *fuqarāʾ* referred especially to the poor adepts but also to the poor in general.[10]

It is not without interest that the more prominent of the historical figures who played special roles in the spreading of the Rifāʿī order in Syria were of rural and humble origins. Thus the founder of its Saʿdiyyah or Jibāwiyyah branch, which drew its following essentially from among the peasants and was very active in their midst between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries,[11] was Saʿd-ud-Dīn aj-Jibāwī (d. 1300) a native of Jibā, a village in the Golan, and before his conversion to Ṣūfism, a "mischief-maker and highway robber."[12] Again, Muḥammad Abū-l-Huda aṣ-Ṣayyādī (1849–1909), who gave the Rifāʿī order a strong shot in the arm during the reign of Sultan ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd (1876–1909), was a native of Miʿrātā, a hamlet near the village of Khān Shaykhūn and in the neighborhood of the town of al-Maʿarrah, which lies to the southwest of Aleppo. Aṣ-Ṣayyadī rose to great eminence, but his father, according to the older folks of al-Maʿarrah, was a poor and illiterate shaykh who traveled from place to place and, in return for one or half a dirham, uttered in invocation a formula of words on a piece of sugar for protection from the sting of a scorpion or a serpent.[13] But, if he aroused the distaste of puritan Muslims, he at the same time attracted into the Rifāʿī order a great many people from the tribes, the villages, and the cities.[14]

Why did Ṣūfism in general and Rifāʿism in particular find such wide acceptance in the Syrian countryside? Reconstructing the reasons for this fact is by no means easy, if only because the peasants too rarely spoke for themselves, not to mention the dearth of historical evidence, particularly for the more distant past.

Perhaps one clue lies in the degree of affinity between Ṣūfism and the form of Christianity previously prevalent among Syria's peasants, the bulk of whom, it would appear, had clung to the Christian faith until the late thirteenth century. The occasional use of Syriac words in Ṣūfī invocations points to this affinity.[15] Ṣūfism, like Syrian Christianity, dwelt on miracles, idealized poverty, and encouraged such attitudes as contentment, humility, trust in God, and patience in the face of pain, provocation, or adversity. Obviously, some of these Ṣūfī values accorded with the peasants' natural instinct for self-preservation under

conditions of overpowering and capricious rule. Patience in such circumstances served them better than the dangerous course of open resistance, and may eventually have helped them in overcoming effrontery.

The close dependence of the well-being of the peasants on natural processes and their feeling of helplessness in the face of drought or the ravages of locusts inclined them to accept the Ṣūfī view of these events as signs of divine wrath, and of the Ṣūfī ritualistic practices as means by which this wrath could be allayed or averted. We read in the chronicles of Aḥmad al-Budayrī al-Ḥallāq that in 1747 "locusts abounded" and "prices rose" even as "conceit, malice, and iniquity increased." To get rid of these tribulations, Shaykh Ibrahīm aj-Jibāwī of the Saʿdiyyah branch of Rifāʿīsm and his followers went in procession to the tomb of Sayyidah Zaynab, the granddaughter of the Prophet, in the village of Qabr-is-Sitt and then circled around Damascus and performed a dawsah, that is, the ceremony of "treading," in the course of which the foremost adepts threw themselves down prostrate, with their faces to the ground, and the shaykh rode over their bodies on horseback, presumably without doing them any injury.[16]

The rural background of the more significant leaders of Rifāʿīsm and of many of its duʿāt or propagators undoubtedly assisted in its progress in the countryside. The duʿāt were close to the life and problems of the peasants and attuned enough to their habits of mind to win their support. Obversely, by virtue of the wide links and influence of Rifāʿīsm, connection with the order probably seemed in the eyes of many peasants to be a bulwark against oppression.

But considerations of a more tangible nature were also at play. Abū-l-Ḥuda aṣ-Ṣayyādī himself and many of his followers, especially among the shaykhs and muqaddams, benefited directly or indirectly from the political and financial support—endowments of property and funds—given to the Rifāʿī order by Sultan ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd. More than that, aṣ-Ṣayyādī apparently made up genealogical trees linking himself and many of the order's leading rural and urban families with the order's founder, Aḥmad ar-Rifāʿī and the Prophet Muḥammad, thereby enhancing their status in society and securing for them exemption from military service and immunity from certain fiscal charges.[17]

The rise of aṣ-Ṣayyādī in wealth and his increasingly close association with the landed class apparently lessened the enthusiasm of the peasants for the Rifāʿī order, at least in the district of al-Maʿarrah. Aṣ-Ṣayyādī married into the local family of al-Ḥarākī and may or may not have exerted his power to promote the interests of his father-in-law, Nawras al-Ḥarākī, but the latter won the rank of pasha, brought the local authorities under his control and, by various means, including "false testimonies" and "the use of his retainers to intimidate the peasants," succeeded in appropriating or registering in his name the lands of fifty villages in the region of al-Maʿarrah.[18] It is not known whether this process was assisted by aṣ-Ṣayyādī's chairmanship for a time of a commission for the settlement of land disputes between the notables and the peasants.

At any rate, it is significant that after the outbreak of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, the concomitant withdrawal of official support from the Rifāʿī and other Ṣūfī orders, and the death of aṣ-Ṣayyādī in 1909, the performance of the

dhikr ritual ceased in al-Maʿarrah district, except in the places where it used to be practised prior to the rise of aṣ-Ṣayyādī.[19] It is probable that there was a similar decline in Ṣūfī activities in other districts, particularly in the rural areas of Aleppo province, where aṣ-Ṣayyādī's influence had been strongest.

After aṣ-Ṣayyādī, Rifāʿīsm—and the other Ṣūfī fraternities—gradually grew more shadowy. In the period between the two world wars, under the frontal assaults of Muslim puritan reformists and the exposure to censure or ridicule of the abuses and malpractices of the wilder of the Ṣūfī shaykhs, Ṣūfī forms of belief came more and more into discredit. In the Ghūṭah in the villages of Qaraḥtā, Jisrīn, and ʿIrbīn, Rifāʿīsm faded away in the 1930s, but in Dūmā it became extinct only after the death in 1962 of its local leader, Shaykh Muḥammad al-Akhras.[20] In some other villages it persisted down to Baʿthist times. Even today the ḥadrah, a service "in which the spirit of God is evoked," or the dhikr ritual is performed, is held in Nahjat Brāq, a village four kilometers south of Damascus, but only once a year and not every Friday as in times past. The celebration is attended by villagers from various regions. The continued hold of Rifāʿīsm on a portion of the peasantry was attributed by Shaykh Abū Fahd as-Saqbānī to the heedful observance by Rifāʿī adepts of the Prophet's exhortation: "Abstain from worldly pleasures and God will love you; abstain from the possessions of the people and the people will love you."[21]

As late as the 1970s, however, there was an instance of a Ṣūfī shaykh—Muḥammad an-Nabahānī—bending to his own material advantage the credulity of some of the peasants in seven villages in the Aleppo province. In the village of at-Tuwayyim, for example, he exploited 410 hectares of agricultural land acquired with his own money but registered in the name of sixteen of his supporters, and at the end of the season retained all but a small fraction of the crop, paying his sharecropping devotees, as compensation for their labor, no more than 30 to 40 Syrian pounds monthly plus a sack of grain, thus depriving them of their 40 percent share of the crop under the law regulating agrarian relations. He also expelled from the village eleven peasants who did not see eye to eye with him on the distribution of credit granted by the Agricultural Cooperatives' Bank. It was only after the murder in 1972 of a defiant peasant that the government finally intervened and put an end to his practices.[22]

In the Ḥawrān some of the families or clans that had provided leaders of Ṣūfī orders continued to enjoy influence among the peasants even after they deemphasized or shed their Ṣūfī identity. In this connection the clan of Āl az-Zuʿbī comes to mind. For a long time it furnished in this region the shaykhs of al-Qādiriyyah—an order founded by ʿAbd-ul-Qāder al-Gaylānī (d. 1166)—and had preponderant weight in at least sixteen villages in the districts of Darʿā and Azrāʿ. Its political center during the lifetime of its last chief, Shaykh Muḥammad Mufliḥ az-Zuʿbī, was Kharbat al-Ghazālah, but in the days of the ascendancy of Fāris az-Zuʿbī, a pro-French deputy, Dayr Bakht. Its religious center was al-Musayfirah, some twenty kilometers east of Darʿā, where the clan's walīy or saint is buried. In terms of prestige and political influence it was surpassed in the pre-Baʿthist period only by the clan of Āl al-Ḥarīrī, which

provided the shaykhs of the Rifaʿī order and was dominant in eighteen villages in the same districts, its main seats being at Dāʿil and Shaykh Miskīn, north of the town of Darʿā.[23]

It is difficult not to see in the more salutary aspect of Ṣūfism a kind of an emotional aid for the peasants in times of hardship. Without it many peasants would probably have faced alone forces that were scarcely friendly. Ṣūfism also helped to integrate the peasants socially and knit them in its own way into the fabric of Islamic society. Its kinder shaykhs and muqaddams interceded, when possible, on their behalf with the government in such matters as imposts or military conscription. On the other hand, Ṣūfism implanted in many peasants ideas and attitudes such as contentment, resignation, or the belief in fate and divine decree that were servile and quietist in their ultimate effects. In this sense it weakened the Ṣūfi-minded peasants and made them an easy prey to unscrupulous landlords. More than that, in certain historical periods and particularly during the reign of Sultan ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd II (1876–1909) Ṣūfism and its orders became a valuable appendage of the Ottoman state. As the rulers seconded the fraternities on the material side, they in turn provided the rulers with the moral means to keep the peasants—and the urban populace—in hand. By fostering the values of loyalty and obedience even to a bad sultan and teaching that such values were inseparable from religious piety, Ṣūfism degenerated into a defender and safeguard of absolutism.

It must be added, however, that during the French occupation the Ṣūfī movement was far from disposed to urge submission. True, some shaykhs held aloof and others, like Shaykh Asʿad aṣ-Ṣāḥib, leader of the Naqshbandi order in Damascus, showed "forbearance toward the authorities,"[24] or, like the chief of the Qādirī—connected Zuʿbī clan, steered a collaborationist course.[25] But other shaykhs boldly challenged the French. Thus the Aleppan Shaykh Riḍā ar-Rifāʿī (1885–1948) and his uncle, Shaykh Ṭāher ar-Rifāʿī (1872–1926) threw their weight behind the northern Syrian rural revolt of 1919–1921 led by Ibrahīm Hanānū (1869–1935), a former Ottoman official and the son of a rural notable from Kafr Takhārīm southwest of Aleppo.[26] Again, Shaykh Dīb al-Qadīmī (1893–1958), who also belonged to the Rifāʿī order and was a native of al-Qadim, a village south of Damascus, joined the peasant rebels and fought side-by-side with them in the Ghūṭah during the great Syrian uprising of 1925–1927.[27]

All the same, Ṣūfism was beyond question one of the powerful conservative forces in the life of the peasants and constituted an impediment in the way of any rational effort to find real solutions for their problems.

CHAPTER 8

The Proneness in Ottoman and Mandate Times of the Peasant Mountaineers to Rebellion and of the Peasants of the Open Plains to Indirect Methods of Defense

THERE IS A SAYING by Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (d. 652 or 654), a traditionalist and adviser to the first Arab governor of Syria. "When God created the world," he said, "he paired all things. 'I shall go to Syria,' said Reason. 'And I shall join you,' said Rebellion."[1] But in rural Syria, Rebellion nestled most comfortably among the peasant mountaineers. By contrast, the peasants of the open plains rarely resorted to measures of open violence and, in countering oppression, relied more on the subtle contrivances of Reason.

In Ottoman times in the vast treeless rainfed plain of the Ḥawrān the peasants faced many difficulties. When the writ of the state ran precariously in the countryside, they lay open to plunder by armed bandits or disorderly troops or nomadic Arab tribes and, after 1685—and more so after 1711 and especially in the nineteenth century—had to resist attempts at expansion by land-hungry Druze who had newly settled in the neighboring mountains. When the state recovered or expanded its material power, the Ḥawrān peasants had to cope with frequent demands for forced labor, or recurring capricious requisitions of food for government troops or beasts of burden for the conveyance of military supplies, not to mention the importunities or extortions of moneylenders or tax collectors or tax farmers or their own village shaykhs. With the spread of security in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the subsequent construction of the Ḥijāz railway through the Ḥawrān, and the partial absorption of the region into the international trade network, the peasants came under a new economic pressure by absentee landlords, who had succeeded in obtaining from the Ottoman government title deeds under the 1858 Land Law conferring on them proprietary rights in lands held by the peasants under the mushāʿ (communal farming) system. Moreover, from the 1830s onward the peasants became liable to repeated conscriptions or were forced to contribute an equivalent sum in money. In the words of John Bowring, the conscriptions were carried on—at least, during the Egyptian occupation of Syria (1831–1840)—"by a sort of general arrest" in the fields or in peasant dwellings, the more suitable men being driven from their families for service far away from their homes.[2]

From the viewpoint of the peasants of the Ḥawrān, presenting a bold front to their adversaries and meeting force with force was not a viable choice, inasmuch as they were unequal to them in terms of power. If they turned to vio-

lence, it was as a last resort and out of sheer despair. To get round their difficulties, they had recourse, as a rule, to patient or circumspect methods.

Thus, to thwart exactions or reduce their extent, they built or made use of ancient maḥmiyyāt, that is, underground chambers in which they hid their grain. The maḥmiyyāt were quadrangular in shape and had different depths and base areas. They were walled up and covered with basalt slabs and a layer of clay and thick bushes. They were usually accessible by a rope ladder or, sometimes, by a small flight of stone steps, and had only one opening which was so blocked up as to escape easy detection by soldiers or marauders. Remains of maḥmiyyāt are found all over the Ḥawrān.[3]

Again, to escape oppressive taxes or other vexations, the peasants turned to good account their mobility and the abundance of arable land, moving out of their villages as whole clans with their wives and children, and seeking new abodes in the deserted ancient houses in other parts of the Ḥawrān. Entire villages took off in this manner. It was their most common mode of remonstrance. This is why there were in this (as in other) regions in the early nineteenth century so many villages that were abandoned or intermittently inhabited.[4]

In some instances the inhabitants of hamlets sought safety by annexing themselves to stronger settlements. Certain villages, called ḥaush, were enclosed, their houses being joined for mutual defence. Entrance to them was through a solid wooden gate that was tightly secured at night.[5] But these villages could withstand only small bands of robbers and not powerful tribes or daring raiders from the Druze Mountain.

On occasion the Ḥawrān peasants sought to maneuver themselves into less disadvantageous conditions by attempting to divide their enemies. They thus entered into agreements with some of the more powerful tribes to lead their flocks of sheep and goats to pasturage during the winter. In return they gave them one-fourth of the lambs and kids and "a like proportion" of the butter.[6] They also paid them the khuwwah (literally, "brotherhood") so that they would refrain from raiding their fields and guard their harvest against other tribes or the redoubtable Druze. But the peasants found from experience that they fared far better when they were shorn only by the government than when the government, the local shaykhs, the Druze, and the vagrant tribes did the shearing.[7] Hence, their preference for a strong, well-established authority. The evidence for this is the increasing repopulation of the deserted villages in the last two decades of Ottoman rule as the government extended and consolidated its hold over the Ḥawrān. All the same, the government did not cease to be the object of their distrust.

Whether in regard to the insecurity that attached to their conditions, or the hardships or wrongs from which they suffered, or their ways of defending themselves or resolving their problems, or the proportion of their energy which they devoted to sheer survival, the peasants of the Ḥawrān typified the other cultivating plains people, including those of the plains around Ḥimṣ, Ḥamāh, and Aleppo. An exception must, however, be made in the case of the tenants of

the saniyyah or crown estates of Sultan ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd (1876–1909), which covered no fewer than 445,000 hectares in 567 villages in the districts lying east and south of Aleppo alone. Here the peasants paid merely 17 percent of the proceeds of their labor, including 7 percent as rent for the land, the rest being the ʿushr or tithe. They were liable to no other levy except for the kōda or animal head tax, and were freed from conscription. Moreover, they were guarded by soldiers or policemen. They were thus better off and more contented than other peasants of the plains. However, after the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, the crown lands became the property of the state, and under the French Mandate were in large part alienated to tribal shaykhs or to men with money or influence. The change in landlordship induced a decline in the tenants' fortunes.[8]

In their actions and reactions, the peasants of the mountains differed from those of the plains. What distinguished the peasant mountaineers was their habit of wielding arms and their tendency to go upon raids or to rise in armed resistance against the government. This was especially true of the montane peasants who formed relatively compact communities and had a long autonomous tradition, like the Druze of Jabal al-ʿArab, or others who, though less closely integrated and more riven than the Druze by feuds along tribal lines, tended to be ethnically aloof and concentrated in particular regions, such as the ʿAlawīs of the Coastal Mountains. Except during the Egyptian occupation of Syria (1831–1840), these ʿAlawīs were in the Ottoman era governed, like the Druze, by their own chiefs, at least until 1858, when they fell under an unstable and discontinuous direct Turkish rule.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century to the great Syrian revolt of 1925–1927, Druze peasants were involved in no fewer than eighteen major raids against villages in the Ḥawrān or armed risings against—or military encounters with—the Egyptians, the Ottomans, or the French.[9] In the same period the montane ʿAlawī peasants defied or took up arms against the established government on at least thirteen different occasions.[10]

There was obviously a degree of correlation between restlessness or rebellion and religious heterodoxy. But this inference has to be qualified in the light of the behavior of the thinly scattered ʿAlawīs of the plains who, although originally from the mountains, had in time become less spirited, less hardened, and more submissive than the montane ʿAlawīs.

It is true that there are elements in the heterodox religions that tend to foster qualities or sentiments associated with warfare. For example, the Druze faith instills in its devotees the virtue of valor. "Whoever fears a human being like himself falls under his sway: the Muwaḥḥid [the unitarian, that is, the Durzī] is valiant by dint of his faith," says Ḥamzah, the first guide of the Druze, in one of his epistles.[11] The belief of the Druze that the duration of their life has been unalterably determined beforehand and that their soul will pass at death into another body reinforces their fearlessness. This may perhaps explain to some extent their martial habits and love of fighting. But the inurement to war of the peasants of Jabal Druze had its roots in their prolonged exposure to perils and their recurrent clashes with warrior-nomads. In Ottoman times, in the words of

a Druze historian, they "ploughed the soil with the rifle on their shoulders."[12] However, the factor that worked most in their favor and enabled them to defy and resist the government, often with success, was the difficult and inhospitable nature of the parts of the country in which they lived and fought, and the remoteness of these parts from the centers of state power. Much the same can be said about the montane ʿAlawīs, who were similarly protected by nature against surprise attacks, and lived in areas marked by abrupt precipitous rises and deep narrow gorges.

Many of the Druze and ʿAlawī risings were more a matter of natural impulse than deliberate organization. They also often led to single independent results, in the sense that the outcome of a preceding revolt had frequently no influence on the revolts that followed. Moreover, most of them were at bottom negative in character. In other words, they were directed against specific wrongs or particular burdensome demands. The peasants hated taxes of every kind, except for the zakāt, the Islamic alms tax. But the thing they detested most was conscription. As one ʿAlawī shaykh put it in 1850: "Taxes, however heavy, are as nothing compared with separation from our children."[13] Revolts against the state intensified in the second half of the nineteenth century as its efforts to consolidate its taxing or recruiting powers gathered strength. In the eyes of the peasants, the government was an evil, encroaching force and its revenue ill gotten. The ʿuqqāl or Druze sages believed that "the possessions of rulers and emirs are ḥarām (unlawful)." They, therefore, did not "partake of their food or the food of their servants."[14] ʿAlawī Shaykhs shared the same belief. "In my entire life," said Shaykh ʿAlī Salmān, the father of Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī, the leader of the ʿAlawī upheaval of 1918–1921, "I have not broken bread with a government official for fear that he may have done an injustice to a human being."[15]

Some of the revolts arose in part from the imbalance between the dense overpopulation and the scarcity of resources in the mountains. This factor was definitely at play in the uprising led by Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī.[16] Similarly, much of the restlessness of the peasants of Jabal Druze was called forth by their hunger for land. Faced in 1876 or thereabout with an Ottoman ultimatum for the payment of the mīrī or state tax and the return of seventeen villages wrested by the Druze from the peasants of the Ḥawrān, Shaykh Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥinnāwī, the Druze spokesman, replied: "the mīrī will be willingly paid as a *zakāt*. . . . But handing over the villages to their owners is unacceptable to the clans. We acquired them by the sword. Let them recover them by the sword. If you desire to take them forcibly, we will first irrigate their soil with blood and if you march on us, we will meet you with gunpowder and the decreed day."[17]

The peasants invariably formed the rank and file of the rebel forces in the Druze and ʿAlawī mountains but, with few exceptions, the leading role was played by the clan chiefs. Some revolts were indeed essentially affairs of these chiefs, and clearly separate from the interests of the peasants. Typical of this was the turbulence raised around 1854 by Ismāʿīl Beg, a lesser chief of the ʿAlawī tribe of al-Matāwirah, who, claiming a special sanctity and styling himself as Mushīr aj-Jabal—the Marshal of the Mountain—extended his power

over other ʿAlawī tribes, gained recognition by the Ottomans as district governor, and ended up as a petty despot, fleecing the peasants and enriching his friends, only to be hanged by the neck in Damascus in 1859.[18]

Other rural revolts had the characteristics of communal actions and were oriented toward communal interests. In the nineteenth century the whole Druze community of the Jabal was involved in resisting the repeated attempts by the government to carry out the compulsory enrollment of men for military service. The defeat of these attempts naturally redounded to the advantage of both the peasants and the clan chiefs.

The leaders of the revolts were, sometimes at least in their origin akin to the peasants or not markedly higher than them in economic condition or social standing. A case in point is that of Ismāʿīl al-Aṭrash (d. 1869), leader of the movement against the Banī Ḥamdān, who had provided the hereditary head shaykhs of Jabal Druze since the late seventeenth century. According to a contemporary manuscript of unknown authorship but clearly penned by an unfriendly Christian priest, Ismāʿīl al-Aṭrash "did not stem from a family of consequence like that of the Ḥamdāns," but "was at first a herder of cattle, hiring himself out on a yearly basis and later proved to be a man of courage and among the more resolute of the country brigands."[19] A twentieth-century author links Ismāʿīl's ancestry—apparently on the basis of information furnished by Druze sources or by the Aṭrash family—to ʿAbd-al-Ghaffār, an inhabitant of the village of Taltīthah in the Aleppo region and an offspring of Shaykh ʿAlī al-ʿAks, one-time muqaddam or administrative chief of the Aʿla Mountain. The same author maintains that the descendants of ʿAbd-al-Ghaffār eventually settled in Jabal Druze and were granted by the Ḥamdāns three villages, including al-Qurayyah, whose shaykhship was held by Ismāʿīl al-Aṭrash when he achieved prominence in the middle of the nineteenth century for his exploits against the bedouins and his defiance of the Ottomans.[20]

Be that as it may, when Ismāʿīl next challenged the authority of the Ḥamdāns, he bent to his purposes a growing feeling of discontent among the peasants. Under the later Ḥamdāns, the cultivators were treated as "slaves" and could at will be transferred from one village to another or expelled from the Jabal altogether. Peasants and subshaykhs also incurred a head tax. Christian peasants had, in addition, to surrender the males of their livestock and contribute ten golden pieces of eight for every daughter in the family entering wedlock.[21] Backed by the peasants and the lesser clans, Ismāʿīl al-Aṭrash succeeded in putting an end to the overlorship of the Ḥamdāns between 1853 and 1857, if a recent account is accurate.[22] According to an older version, the deathblow to their rule came in 1869 when their capital, as-Suwaydā', fell into the hands of Ismāʿīl's son, Ibrāhīm al-Aṭrash.[23]

If anything, the conditions of the peasants got worse during the ascendancy of the Aṭrash family, and in particular after Ibrāhīm became the paramount shaykh. For one thing, the pressure on the land increased with the arrival in the Jabal of new Druze immigrants from Lebanon. For another, the Aṭrash family tended to keep in its possession a considerable portion of the land in the vil-

lages seized from the Ḥawrānīs or the newly settled villages in the southern part of the mountains, so that many peasants found themselves without a plot of their own and reduced to mere sharecroppers. Others, even in the long-established villages, did not have enough land to live on. Moreover, a kind of forced labor in the field or in the shaykh's house that went by the name of qurʿah was extracted from captives, and the earlier practice of driving out peasants from the farms at the pleasure of the shaykhs and without compensation remained in effect. The shaykhs also reserved to themselves the right to maintain maḍāfas (guest-houses) or be specially attired, to the extent that one shaykh is said to have killed a peasant for wearing Aleppan red velvet shoes—a shaykh's prerogative—in a public meeting.[24]

All these things were to lead to an extraordinary type of rural revolt—a glaring class action—in which the peasants were no longer, as previously, mere instruments but weighed heavily in the scale, fighting for a cause that was their own and in pursuit of aims they had long cherished. This quite different insurrectionary effort was the ʿĀmmiyyah or Mass Upheaval of 1889–1890. Its only analogue in nineteenth-century greater Syria was the rising of the peasants of the Kisirwān region in Lebanon against their feudal lords in 1858–1859.[25]

The prelude to the ʿĀmmiyyah was a series of secret meetings held in 1889 by the chiefs of the lesser clans, in which they sought to unify their ranks against the paramount shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Aṭrash, who by this time was also formally the Ottoman-designated deputy governor and de facto chief administrative officer of the Jabal. On news of these meetings reaching Shiblī, the brother of Ibrāhīm, with whom he was at cross-purposes, he began to excite the emotions of the peasants, apparently in the hope of placing himself at the head of the impending movement. But by rousing the peasants, Shiblī succeeded only in bringing to the surface their long-simmering anti-Aṭrash discontent. To his surprise, they turned against him and the entire Aṭrash family. At first the whole south of the Jabal, where the Aṭrash power was concentrated, took fire, but eventually the flames of the ʿĀmmiyyah spread to the north as the peasants proceeded to oust the more considerable of the non-Aṭrash shaykhs from their villages and divest them of their property.

At the height of the ʿĀmmiyyah, and as Ibrāhīm al-Aṭrash and the other shaykhs began entertaining the idea of invoking the aid of the Ottomans, the ʿuqqal or sages, fearing that the Jabal Druze would lose its special autonomous status, intervened, offering to mediate the conflict. In a compromise reached in the autumn of 1889 the Aṭrash family and the other shaykhs agreed to relinquish some of their privileges and recognized the right of the peasants to own land. But in the spring of 1890 the peasants, sensing that the shaykhs were not serious about honoring their agreement, resumed the ʿĀmmiyyah.

The peasants were unambiguous about their principal demands. They sought the reduction of the shaykh's share to one-eighth of the land in each village and the parceling out of the rest among the peasants. They also claimed the right to appoint village headmen responsive to their needs and interests. More than that,

they wanted to eliminate the arbitrary practices of the shaykh and in particular his power to evict the peasants from their holdings.

The armed conflict culminated in a battle at ʿAyn al-Mazraʿah near Suwaydāʾ, in which the peasants carried the day. The Aṭrash shaykhs fled for refuge to Damascus, preferring, as Shiblī put it elliptically in one of his poems, "death at the hand of the enchained lion [the Ottoman state fettered by the great powers] than by the venom of the snake [the peasant masses]."[26] At this juncture the Ottoman government, utilizing the turn of events with a view to its own ultimate advantage, sent a sizable force to the Jabal, occupied Suwaydāʾ, and crushed the ʿĀmmiyyah in blood. But the Druze peasants did not lose all their gains. Many of them became now small property owners, the shaykhs in many villages retaining only one-eighth of the land—though others, such as Shiblī al-Aṭrash, kept as much as one-fourth and still others even more. But the power of the shaykhs over the peasants was restored.[27]

The only other insurrectionary attempt against the Aṭrash chiefs in which peasant elements were involved came much later in 1947, after Syria's achievement of its independence. There had earlier been a periodic flaring up of talk in Jabal Druze in favor of a transfer of allegiance from Syria to Transjordan, occasioned by Aṭrash dissatisfaction at the apportionment of subsidies and administrative posts.[28] Disturbed by this current of talk, President Shukrī al-Quwwatlī, acting for the mercantile oligarchy of Damascenes that ran the Syrian republic, is said to have spurred the Druze sharecroppers into a rebellion against their Aṭrash landlords. After burning down Aṭrash homes in a number of villages and doing battle not far from the Aṭrash fastness of al-Qurayyah, the sharecroppers were subdued.[29]

As for the great Syrian revolt of 1925–1927, it is beyond question that the peasant mountaineers of Jabal Druze and the peasant-gardeners of the Ghūṭah or Damascus oasis formed the rural mainstay of the revolt and bore its major burden. Moreover, at least as far as the Ghūṭah is concerned, it would seem on the basis of the existing evidence that it was, by and large, the peasants with land rather than the landless peasants who most strongly supported the rebels: all the villages that rushed to arms or contributed men and supplies to the revolt of their own accord or under no apparent compulsion were villages in which landownership was widely distributed or villages characterized by the predominance of independent peasant proprietors.[30] Other villages with similar agrarian features stood aloof or refused outright to join the rebellion, and in one known instance peasants, fearing destruction at the hands of the French occupiers, unsuccessfully pleaded with the rebels to evacuate their village.[31] Moreover, if the informants of the imaginative French Intelligence Service were reliable, in some unspecified villages sharecroppers were lured into the rebellion by promises of a division among them—in the eventuality of its success—of the estates of pro-French notables.[32]

By taking up arms, the peasants with land had more to lose than the landless peasants. Why they chose—where they had the power of choice—to cast in

their lot with the rebels is a question that cannot be answered confidently, as it is not easy now to enter into their motives. But it would be safe to say that the painful crop failure of 1925,[33] the acute fluctuations of the French franc with which the Syrian currency was linked (the rate of exchange of the Syrian pound in the month of January averaged $2.99 in 1923, 95 cents in 1924, $1.08 in 1925, and 75 cents in 1926),[34] the related almost twofold increase of the land tax,[35] the efficiency with which revenue was now collected—(unprecedented when compared with the unmethodical ways of the Ottomans), and the inevitable rise in the cost of credit—all these things could not but have imperiled the hold of the small peasant proprietors on their patches of land, and may have been instrumental in driving many of them into the arms of the rebellion. The ruthless punitive expeditions and intense air and artillery bombardments carried out by the French in 1926 against the villages of the Ghūṭah, while intimidating some peasants, impelled others toward the rebel cause.[36] More than that, the peasants in the villages closest to Damascus could not have remained unaffected by the anti-French animus of the nationalists of the capital, which has its roots in the forcible breakup of geographic Syria, the partition of its remains along religious or sectarian lines, the loss of much of its access to the Mediterranean Sea, its severance from its natural markets in Turkey, Iraq, and Palestine, and the growing hold of French companies on its economy.[37]

The peasants of Jabal Druze were also hit hard by the cumulative effects of the severe drought, the debasement of the currency, and the heavier tax demand. But the genesis of their rebellion is not to be sought merely in the hardships of their class. They defied the French as members of a community, and as such were also actuated by resentment at the erosion of the autonomy of the Jabal, the want of regard of the foreign occupiers for local customs and traditions, their disruptive tactic of setting clan against clan or exploiting interclan rivalries, the high-handed sway of the incumbent French governor and his use of compulsory labor on an unparalleled scale, not sparing for work on public roads dissident clan chiefs and even, in one instance, a shaykh venerable for his austere life and religious learning.[38] When Sulṭan al-Aṭrash, the leading spirit of the revolt, galloped from one village to another in the middle of 1925 summoning the peasants to arms, the first note in his appeal, as may be inferred from an authoritative account, was "the saving of the honor of the Druze community."[39] But his principal concern may well have been the unequivocal French threat to the established Aṭrash order. Even so, he had had connections with nationalist elements since 1916 or earlier, six years or so after the hanging of his father by the Turks, and during the uprising showed an ability to transcend the bounds of narrow local perspectives and link the grievances of the Jabal with those of the whole country.[40]

Were the peasants involved at any level in a leadership role in any phase of the insurrection? At the highest level, the guiding and coordinating functions, if irregularly exercised, remained all along in the hands of Sulṭān al-Aṭrash and such influential nationalists as ʿAbd-ur-Raḥmān Shāhbandar, a physician from a family of middle merchants and the real heart of the independence movement in

Damascus. The only man of humble origins who formed a significant link in the rough-and-ready chain of command was Ḥasan al-Kharrāṭ, an unlettered strong man (*qabaḍay*) and orchards' guard from the Shāgūr quarter of the capital. According to Shāhbandar, al-Kharrāt was in practice "a socialist" and played "the preeminent role" in the battles of the Ghūṭah.[41]

However, well-to-do peasants or village chiefs or their sons provided, in at least some instances, the on-scene or direct leaders of rural guerrilla bands.[42] Three such leaders who achieved regional renown belonged to one family of wealthy peasants from Dūmā.[43]

Of all classes, the peasants suffered most from the 1925–1927 revolt. By dint of repeated French bombardments, retributive raids and depredations by French columns, and importunities by the more irresponsible of the rebel bands, many of the peasants of the Ghūṭah were ruined, losing their houses, crops, cattle, and household effects.[44] The consequences for the peasants of Jabal Druze were no less serious in terms of loss of both life and property.[45] At the same time, the revolt brought the peasants of the two regions closer together, at least on the moral plane, if only because of their common suffering and sacrifices.

CHAPTER 9

The Communists and the Peasants

THE COMMUNIST party, whose embryonic nucleus came to life on October 24, 1924, was not at bottom agrarian in its outlook.[1] It was primarily oriented toward the workers and envisaged the peasants in merely supporting roles. Nevertheless, it was the first modern political organization in Syria to bring the tillers of the soil within its range of vision. As early as April 30, 1925, it expressed as one of the aims of the front association that it set on foot "the grouping of workers and peasants in unions for the defense of their common interests."[2]

Its central figure, Fū'ād ash-Shimālī, a tobacco worker who was to guide the party until 1932, had his roots in the peasantry: he had been born in 1894 to a poor Maronite cultivator in the village of as-Suhaylah in Kisirwān, a region to the northeast of Beirut celebrated in local lore for providing the backbone of the agrarian upheaval of 1858–1859.[3] In fact, two out of the five members of the first central committee, which held the helm from 1925 until its arrest by the French police in 1926 (for organizing the clandestine conveyance of arms to the insurrectionists in Jabal Druze), were of peasant extraction.[4] So were also three out of the five members of the second[5] and third central committees,[6] which led the party in the periods 1928–1930 and 1930–1932, respectively. The most prominent communist from Syria's interior, Nāṣir Ḥiddah, then a student and later a secondary school teacher of mathematics at Ḥimṣ, was also of rural origin: his father was an Arab Muslim Sunni peasant from the village of Yabrūd in the Qalamūn region.[7] Ḥiddah, who was elevated to the party center in 1930, also played a role in winning over to communism in the same year Khālid Bakdāsh,[8] an eighteen-year-old Damascene student, the son of a Kurdish Ottoman officer, and the party's secretary from 1937 onward. From Fū'ād ash-Shimālī's standpoint, the rise of Bakdāsh to first place signified the fall of the party into the grip of the "intellectuals."

The rural roots of most of the early leading communists sensitized them to the problems and conditions of the peasantry and its undercurrents of feeling and desires. In their agrarian program of July 7, 1931, they clearly recognized that in Syria husbandmen were "more ill-treated" than other elements of the people, and tersely called for divesting "the rich" of their control over perennial springs; supplying all villages with piped drinking water; abolishing forced labor; canceling all debts owed by the small peasants and exempting them from the tithe and other taxes; providing a minimum wage, shorter workings hours, and social security for agricultural laborers; and expropriating the large landowners, foreign farmers, and religious missions and distributing their estates and mīrī lands among the indigent peasants. They also held up the fanciful

demand for a Workers' and Peasants' Government in Syria.[9] In this they were merely following the lead of the Communist International, but it would be a mistake to suppose that they had become its blind instrument. Although they were regardful of the moral authority of the Bolshevik Revolution, often freely deferring to it, unlike their successors they did not give up their independence of will.[10] This, it would appear, was the reason why the communist career of Fū'ād ash-Shimālī was so abruptly shattered in 1932.[11]

Despite their natural sympathy for the peasants, in Syria proper the early communists made little headway in the countryside except among Christian cultivators in the village of Yabrūd, whose cells, along with those of Damascus, Aleppo, Ḥimṣ, and Nabq, were represented at the party conference held in April 1930.[12] The reasons for their slow progress are not far to seek. For one thing, their activities had still a spasmodic character. For another, due to the lack of roads, many of the villages were inaccessible from the cities that formed the center of gravity of communist work. Moreover, Ṣūfism and the worship of the awliyā' or "friends of God" had as yet their hold on the greater number of peasants. The minority character of all but one of the foremost communist leaders also hindered the advance of the party: Nāṣir Ḥiddah was the only Arab Sunni, the others were either non-Arabs—Armenians—or Maronite Christians.[13]

Under Khālid Bakdāsh, who took charge during the first phase of the party's legal existence—the period 1936–1939—the agrarian line of the communists became ambiguous and more and more timidly reformist. By 1942, as the party entered its second phase of legality, Bakdāsh was bending over backward to gain the goodwill of Syria's landlords. "We assure the owners of land," he declared, "that we do not and shall not demand the confiscation of their property. . . . All that we ask is kindness toward the peasant and the alleviation of his misery."[14] The rationalization for this abandonment of the party's class perspective involved the premise that Syria was still in "the stage of national liberation," which necessitated an emphasis on what unites rather than on what separates "the sons of the one homeland."[15]

The new line was ill received by communists in the provincial party organizations who knew about the agrarian problem at first hand, but their objections were set aside. Acting often on their own initiative and eluding the obstacles thrown in their path by the leadership's inconstant course, they succeeded between 1936 and 1948 in putting down roots among Greek Orthodox peasants in the villages of Ṣaḥnāyā in the western Ghūṭah; Ṣaydnāyā, north of Damascus; Kafrūn, Bishrāyeh, Mashta-l-Ḥilū (the site of a school owned by the party), and ʿAyn Dābish in the district of Ṣafītah; Dayr ʿAṭiyyeh in the Qalamūn area; al-Musharrfeh and aṭ-Ṭīnah in the Ḥimṣ region; Ṣuqaylibiyyah, northwest of Ḥamāh; and ʿArnūq in the province of Ṭarṭūs. They also implanted themselves among ʿAlawī peasants belonging to the tribe of al-Khayyāṭīn, particularly in the villages of Sibbeh and ʿAyn Bashrītī at the south end of the Nuṣayrī Mountains and among ʿAlawī cultivators working for Christian landlords in the villages of Ḥadyah and Ḥaṣūr in the district of Tall Kalakh. Moreover, they gained strong footing among the Kurdish peasants in the rich agricultural region of al-

Qāmishlī, who had migrated from Turkey after World War I and constituted a large element in Syria's northeastern province of aj-Jazīrah. Communist activities in this province were facilitated by the rapid change it was undergoing in the post-World War II period from grazing and small-scale rainfed agriculture to irrigated cotton and mechanized grain cultivation.[16]

But much of the support that the Communists won in the countryside and the cities evaporated in the wake of their leadership's unpopular endorsement of the Kremlin's acceptance in 1947 of the plan for the partition of Palestine and the ensuing proscription of the party in 1948 by the Syrian government. According to two former leading communists, who left the organization in 1957, the Communist party counted at the end of 1943 about 7,000 members in both Syria and Lebanon, and in 1947 about 20,000 members in Lebanon and 15,000 members in Syria, but by 1949 its strength had dropped sharply to "several hundreds" in each of the two countries.[17] Many of its peasant-followers went over to Akram Ḥūrānī's organization, which in 1950 took on the name of the Arab Socialist party.[18]

Khālid Bakdāsh came in now for strong criticism in the clandestine communist journal *Niḍāl-ush-Shaʿb* by elements who opposed not only his stand on the Palestine question but also his agrarian and social orientations. On the latter subject they deplored the party having "sacrificed some of its basic positions" merely "to propitiate certain bourgeois circles" and protested against Bakdāsh's style of leadership. "Party decisions," they maintained, "often came from above in the form of instructions that had to be carried out without being the object of prior debate in the various party organizations. . . . Comrades who offered comments met with a curious way of persuasion involving the ready-made and peremptory retort: 'this is the view of the Central Committee!'"[19] They also advocated by word of mouth the elimination of "the dictatorial system within the party."[20] But Bakdāsh soon regained his grip on the communist cadres, silencing his critics or turning them out of the organization, or leaving them with no other alternative but to step away from it.

In 1951, however, he shifted course, reviving the old demand for the breakup of the estates of the big landowners and pressing the now much depleted party following "to turn determinedly toward the workers and peasants." He also acknowledged that "the broad masses of . . . indigent peasants have been remote from our minds" and that "our experience in rural work is still insubstantial."[21]

In the next few years the communists were able to win over for the first time Arab Sunnī peasants, particularly in the area of Kfar Takhārīm, northwest of Idlib,[22] and in the region southeast of Dayr az-Zūr, notably in Almū Ḥasan, a village on the left bank of the Euphrates, which came to be known as "Little Moscow."[23] Here in the summer of 1953 peasants belonging to the clan of Albū Khābūr, a branch of the tribe of al-ʿAqaydāt, guided by communist teachers from Dayr az-Zūr and members of communist cells in the local elementary school, resisted the encroachments on the village's mushāʿ land by one of the region's most powerful families, which consisted of wealthy grain merchants,

moneylenders, and pump owners, and stood near in blood relationship to the then minister of agriculture. To free them from dependence on this family, the communists prevailed upon the peasants to organize themselves into a public company and purchase two pumps and two tractors with the money that they raised by subscribing to shares of its capital.[24]

The communists took similar or more radical initiatives in other rural regions, which they had formerly penetrated and in which they recovered much of their lost ground in the period 1954–1958 as they basked again in legality. For example, they induced the peasants in the village of al-Musharrfeh in the Ḥimṣ area to defy their landlord and seize his harvest,[25] and in the villages of Bishrāel and Ḥakr Kābir in the Ṣafītah district and Ḥadyah and Ḥaṣūr in the Tall Kalkh region to desist from paying the tithe or working on the shikārah, a special area that was the perquisite of the landlord and that they were forced to cultivate without payment. They also sponsored numerous rural meetings to win the confidence of the peasants, guide them toward effective methods of struggle, and connect their feelings with communist ideas.[26]

But whatever gains the communists achieved proved ephemeral. In 1958, driven underground and undermined by Khālid Bakdāsh's negative attitude toward the Egypt-Syria merger and the Agrarian Reform Law, they underwent another precipitous decline from which they had not since risen again to any serious role in the life of the peasants or the country at large. It is true that since 1966, when they won back their legality, their party or one or the other or two of their main factions have been represented in almost every Syrian cabinet, except between 1981 and 1986 when they came under a transient ban. It is also true that, save for the period just mentioned, they have filled two out of eighteen seats in the Central Command of the National Progressive Front, which President Ḥāfiz al-Asad first put together in March 1972, and that in elections for the People's Assembly—a parliamentary body with limited powers—they won in 1973 six and in 1977 eight out of 186 seats, but none in 1981—when they fell out with Asad—and in 1986 they won nine out of 195 seats.[27] But their association with the regime has been more a liability than an asset and their impact upon policy or events has been negligible.

In retrospect, the factors that led to the Communists party's loss of influence and moral power are obvious. The recurring, unpredictable, and contradictory shifts in its leadership's attitude toward important national and social issues and their inconsonance with the party's living circumstances were bewildering and demoralizing not only to the peasants and workers in its ranks but to its own intelligentsia. The grounds given by the leadership for the unpopular lines that it adopted were seldom convincing and sometimes absurd and plainly out of accord with the facts: for instance, in opposing the Agrarian Reform Law of 1958, Khālid Bakdāsh argued that its main beneficiary was "the Egyptian upper bourgeoisie"![28] According to his long-time colleagues and present-day opponents, "Bakdāsh was not in contact with the bases of the party, did not visit its organizations, had no real knowledge of Syria, and made no effort to familiarize himself at first hand with the actual conditions of the common people."[29]

The dissatisfaction with his leadership was sharpened by his intolerance of the slightest criticism, his cultivation of an aura of infallibility, the transformation of "his subjective will into the law of party life" (as five out of the seven members of the Politbureau put it in 1972),[30] his apparent irremovableness from the office of the party's secretary general, and his deference (until 1986) to a Soviet leadership that had, in practice but not in phraseology, clearly broken with the communist revolutionary tradition. All these things produced in the 1970s and 1980s repeated splits among the higher echelons and in the ranks, which further weakened the party and led to a drifting away from the movement of "thousands of bona fide communists and hundreds of experienced party, workers' and peasants' cadres."[31]

It is interesting that three out of the five principal factions of which the movement is now composed called in the second half of the 1980s or earlier for its "independence from the Communist party of the Soviet Union." One is the League of Communist Action, which came into being in the first half of the 1970s and was renamed in 1981 the Party of Communist Action. It is an underground group that from the outset struck out upon a path of armed struggle against Syria's regime and is rumored to be led largely by ʿAlawī army officers or to include a large number of ʿAlawīs among its active members.[32] The second faction, the Communist Party Politbureau, guided by Riyāḍ-ut-Turk—a native of Ḥimṣ, a lawyer by training, and a veteran member of the Politbureau—broke with the main party in late 1973, steered at once a course hostile to the Asad government and during the repression of the early 1980s received painful blows.[33] The third faction is that of Khālid Bakdāsh, who asserted his "independence" from Moscow by holding "contrary to the advice of the international Communist movement" a "separate congress" between July 17 and 19, 1986, which "formally consecrated the division of the party." Only eight out of the twenty-six members of the Central Committee and none of the members of the Politbureau followed him.[34] The secretary general of the mainstream faction, which has been trying to reunify the party, is now Yūsuf Fayṣal, the son of a druggist from Ḥimṣ and himself a trainee in pharmacy. The remaining faction, the Organization of the Base, which believes that the party must be governed by the will of the rank-and-file members,[35] is led by Murād Yūsuf, a graduate of Cairo's al-Azhar University, an ex-teacher of Arabic, and the son of an indigent Circassian from al-Qunayṭrah.[36]

It is difficult to form a notion of the present strength of the movement or of its peasant composition. In 1969, at the time of the convocation of its Third Congress, when it was still a unified party, it probably counted about 5,000 members, 62 percent of whom were, according to a circular by its Central Committee, workers and "poor peasants." However, out of the 101 delegates attending the congress only 25 percent were workers and 13 per cent peasants.[37] None of the present top leaders of the mainstream faction live by agriculture, and only one is of rural extraction. At its Sixth Congress, held in January 1987, its secretary general found it "painful" to admit "the thinness of our presence among the needy cultivators" and their "abandonment to fate."[38]

But a faithful history must throw into relief that in the 1940s and 1950s the communists contributed significantly to the political education of a substantial number of peasants and agricultural laborers in the Qalamūn, the Ḥimṣ region, the Jazīrah, and the ʿAlawī country.

CHAPTER 10

The Arab Socialists, or the First Agrarian Party in Syria's History

THE ARAB SOCIALIST party led the way in centering attention on the peasants and dwelling on the crucial significance of their problem for the life of the whole of society. It also took decisive steps in freeing large numbers of their poorer elements in central Syria from the paralyzing sense of fatalism inherited from the old Ṣūfī outlook, and converting them from a loose disjoined mass into a relatively coherent class with conscious, more or less well-defined aims. More than that, it put an end to their isolation from the mainstream of Syria's political life and broke the ground, materially and psychologically, for the deep changes in their economic and social conditions carried through by the Baʿth regime.

The rise of the Arab Socialists and their success in galvanizing the peasants into action were the product of the maturity and favorable conjuncture of long-developing objective processes and subjective factors.

As a current of thought, the movement that would on March 1, 1950, take on formally the appellation of the Arab Socialist party, emerged in 1939 and had its first organizational expression in Ḥizb-ish-Shabāb or the Youth party. But it did not orient itself resolutely toward the peasants until 1943, when it adopted as its central watchword *Hātū al-Quffah wa-l-Kurēk Linaʿsh al-Āgha wa-l Bēk*, "Fetch the Basket and the Shovel for the Burying of the Agha and the Bey."[1] To grasp the full meaning of this slogan, it is necessary to say something about the town and district of Ḥamāh, in which the movement had its beginnings.

In the words of Akram Ḥūrānī, the moving spirit of the party, of whom more presently, "in the 1940s and 1950s Ḥamāh was sharply divided: on one side stood the dhawāt—the notables or families of distinction—and on the other the people."[2] Not only were their interests directly opposed but the moral gulf between them was profound. The town had a long tradition of popular dissent. Ḥūrānī recalled reading in one of the manuscripts in his father's library that in the eighteenth century the men of the people, their patience being exhausted, rose against the House of Qarnāṣ, which held Ḥamāh in fief and lived by abuses, and crushed down all of its members in blood. But the system of "feudal" landlordry was not thrown off. Other families replaced the Qarnāṣ. In Ḥūrānī's youth (he had been born in 1912) landownership was markedly parasitic in nature and tended to engender and perpetuate acute social contrasts—exorbitant wealth on the one hand and repelling poverty on the other. In 1940 good land in the district of Ḥamāh and the neighboring region of Maṣyāf was in the almost exclusive possession of a few families. The Barāzīs alone owned

forty-nine villages, the ʿAzms twenty-five, and the Kaylānīs twenty-four.[3] They had their own armed men, controlled much of the network of local institutions including the religious establishments, and dominated the lives and bodies of their peasants, harnessing them under their feet. They were so blinded by their private interests that they seemed incapable of considering rights other than their own.

An old, often narrated "evil tale" of the ʿAzms that Gertrude Bell heard when she visited Ḥamāh in 1906 and that was apparently not contradicted by them may or may not be illustrative of the ways by which the lords of the town came to accumulate so much property and the lengths to which they were capable of carrying their abuse of power. In years gone by—the tale goes—an ʿAzm, coveting his neighbor's vineyard and frustrated by his refusal to give it up for money, had one of his own slaves murdered and secretly buried in the desired garden. Charging the unfortunate owner with the crime, he had him arrested and eventually took his property by way of requital.[4]

But the acquisition by the dhawāt of many villages or great estates may in part be explicable by the social functions they had performed in the past, the attendant opportunities, and such gains and perquisites as naturally accrued. The ʿAzms, a family of possibly Arab but probably Turkish Anatolian extraction, enjoyed the title of Bek or Bey and had provided many of Syria's provincial or district governors in the eighteenth century. The Kaylānīs, who had their origins in the Persian district of Gīlān, carried the title of Effendī and were, therefore, "men of the pen." They were also ashrāf or claimants of descent from the Prophet. From their ranks were drawn many of the ʿulamāʾ and the guides of the Qādirī mystic order. The Barāzīs held the title of Āgha and had been "men of the sword" in Ottoman times. In other words, they had discharged military functions in a commanding capacity. They are of Arab descent, unlike their numerous Kurdish namesakes and former protégés who migrated to Damascus from ʿAyn al-ʿArab on the Turkish frontiers, passing through Ḥamāh, and who in the 1940s became, by and large, supporters of the Kurdish Communist leader Khālid Bakdāsh.

The ʿAzms, Kaylānīs, and Barāzīs may have differed from one another in the unequal degrees of prestige or deference they had enjoyed, but they regularly intermarried. At the same time, the more affluent and more powerful among them looked down on much of the rest of society and disdained matrimonial ties even with Ḥamāh's wealthiest mercantile families because they regarded themselves, as one Barāzī put it, "the flower of God's elect."[5]

A differentiation had been taking place for many decades within each of the three families, however, with the result that among them were to be found in the 1940s and 1950s all conditions of men, from the lord wallowing in riches to "the Āgha who was dying from hunger," to use the hyperbolic expression of Colonel ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd as-Sarrāj, a native of Ḥamāh, son of a saddler, and one-time chief of the Military Intelligence Bureau.[6] The Barāzīs, for example, numbered in the thousands in the middle of this century and were thus really a clan. Towering above all the other lineages was that of Amīr Alāy (Colonel) Mu-

ḥammad Āgha al-Barāzī, a commander of an Ottoman regiment, who led a successful campaign in 1880 against insurrectionary peasants in the ʿAlawī Mountain and, as a reward, received many villages and was invested with the office of governor of Ḥamāh. A significant factor in the process of economic differentiation within the clan, that is, in lifting up some of the constituent families and depressing others, was the tendency of certain of the Barāzīs to allow the principle of primogeniture in the division of their landed estates in consonance with ancient Turkish customary norms rather than with the Islamic law of inheritance or the ordained quotas of the Qurʾān. Thus Bākīr al-Barāzī, the son of Amīr Alāy Muḥammad Āgha, passed forty-five villages (*ḍayʿah*) to his first-born Muṣṭafa but only two to his fourth-born son Mukram.[7] He was able to circumvent the law by conveying his property to his heirs before his death. This practice and its consequences drove the less fortunate members of the clan to view themselves also as "victims of feudalism," even if in a lesser degree than the peasants, and should explain why some of them sided with Akram Ḥūrānī when he challenged the power of big landlordry and lighted the torch of agrarian revolt.[8]

No one devoted more of his energies to the service of the peasants or defended their cause with more zeal or was more trusted by them than Akram Ḥūrānī. From the beginning, their movement bore the stamp of his personality. He became the object of sentiments almost akin to those they had harbored for the awliyāʾ or "friends of God." On these things his critics and sympathizers agree.

In view of the considerable influence exercised among the peasants in the past by Rifāʿī Ṣūfī shaykhs, it is significant that Ḥūrānī descended from a religious family that migrated from the Ḥawrān in the second half of the fifteenth century and founded the Rifāʿī order in the region of Ḥamāh.[9] This element in his background and the fact that his father was also a religious shaykh from the same order may perhaps explain to some extent why he won the hearts of the peasants so easily and so effectually, even though he himself had none of the habits of thought or feeling associated with mystics.

Of Ḥūrānī's early nurture little is known, except that he received his elementary training in a local secular school that King Fayṣal established in 1919, and that he grew in surroundings that were deeply and bitterly sensible to the oppressive power of the town's magnates. It is not known whether his father, Rashīd al-Ḥūrānī, suffered special wrongs other than those little insults that seem to be an unconscious product of the arrogance of aristocratic manners and that sometimes inflict a sharper wound on the heart than material injuries. At any rate, he came to regard the town's great families with aversion and spared no pains to reduce their authority. He drew close to the like-minded Shaykh Ḥasan Rizq, a founder in 1900 of *al-Insāniyyah* (Humanity), a periodical with a distinct populist orientation. He also ran in 1908 against Khālid Āgha al-Barāzī in the elections for the Majlis al-Mabʿūthān—the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies—but was defeated. His animus against the big landlords, which drained his resources and dissipated much of his patrimony, drove him in a direction inimical to the Turkish system that underpinned them: he established secret links

with ʿAlī al-Armanāzī, who was involved in the underground Arab nationalist movement and who would die on the gallows in Beirut's principal square on August 21, 1915, without revealing the names of his Ḥamāh confederates.[10] In later years these happenings, as recounted by members of the family, would leave their imprint on the imagination of young Ḥūrānī.

In 1951, as leader of the Arab Socialists, Ḥūrānī would closely associate the struggle against "feudal" power and for peasants' rights with the struggle to weld the Arabs into one nation. He would in essence argue that the well-being of the Arab people, of whom the peasants are the principal component, would depend on their firm union, which would be unrealizable without the social emancipation of the peasants. His pan-Arab propensity may be traced not only to his father's connection with the infant Arab movement but also to other significant influences in his youthful years. The post-World War I fragmentation of Arab lands and geographic Syria, and the related anti-French Revolt of 1925–1927, had powerful echoes at Ḥūrānī's school and stirred in him the first feelings of nationalism, which were later nourished at the Tajhīz, a public preparatory school, and at the College of Law, both in Damascus and both hotbeds of pan-Arabism and attended by Ḥūrānī between 1928 and 1936. Attracted by its opposition to "feudalism," he joined the pan-Syrian P.P.S.—Parti Populaire Syrien—in 1937 but, repelled by its indifference to the pan-Arab ideal, he left its ranks in 1938.[11] The depth and intensity of his nationalist emotions may be gathered from his involvement in 1932 in an attempt upon the life of Ṣubḥī Barakāt, a pro-French expresident of the Syrian state, his hurrying to the aid of Iraq's military movement in 1941 at the head of a number of spirited young officers from Ḥamāh, his active role in the expulsion of the French garrison from his native town in 1945, and his command of groups of irregulars in raids upon Zionist settlements in 1948.[12] In fact, it has recently been maintained that out of the 1,200 men who constituted the guerrilla force that crossed from Syria into Palestine in that year, no fewer than 800 were members of Ḥūrānī's Youth party. Ḥūrānī himself returned from Palestine in a bitter mood and firmly convinced that "feudalism" was at the very basis of the Arab military disaster.[13] In other words, he clearly realized, as did many of his associates and like-minded Baʿthists, that the real cause of the Arab defeat was social, that the armed forces are fashioned by the social situation in which they have their roots, and that the nation cannot fight modern wars with backward mentalities, backward social systems, and petty and disjoined states. Hence the closer linkage he made from this time onward between the national cause and the agrarian question, and the increasing sense of urgency in his appeals and efforts for the economic and political liberation of the peasants.

Who, other than Ḥūrānī, formed the spearhead of the agrarian movement? Did the peasants themselves take a hand in shaping its outlook or steering its course? Although its original nucleus—the Youth party—eventually found its warmest supporters among the peasants, it was called to life by nonagriculturists or, to be specific, by four lawyers,[14] one physician,[15] two school teachers,[16] and one history professor at the Ḥimṣ Military Academy.[17] All of them were

natives of the town of Ḥamāh and, except for two Orthodox Christians,[18] Sunnī Muslims. They also all sprang from families of middling income. One descended from an intermediate landowner,[19] another from a shopkeeper,[20] two from small merchants,[21] and two others from goldsmiths.[22] One of the remaining two founders of the party stemmed from a propertyless family of mystic shaykhs[23] and the other from a family of pharmacists and physicians.[24] They were all actuated by an unfavorable feeling toward the big landlords, which was already kindling into enmity.[25]

By 1950, the year the agrarian movement was reorganized into the Arab Socialist party, the makeup of the leadership had changed in some respects. Thus out of the twelve members of the Council of Delegates (*Majlis-ul-Mufawwaḍīn*), which guided the party until its merger with the Baʿthists in November 1952, only two were natives of Ḥamāh[26] whereas five hailed from Damascus,[27] one from Aleppo,[28] one from Ḥimṣ,[29] and the three others from rural areas.[30] But members of the professions remained dominant within the highest leading stratum: the Council included five college professors,[31] three lawyers,[32] two parliamentary deputies,[33] one physician,[34] and one government official.[35] They were all Sunnī Muslims, except for four Orthodox Christians.[36]

The absence of peasants at the apex of the agrarian movement does not signify that they were of little account in shaping its fortunes. In the important effort to extend its organizational net to the countryside and in the work of agitation at the village level the primary role was played by politically conscious peasant leaders, notably by Sayf-ud-Dīn al-Khālid of the village of ash-Shīḥah, Khalīl aṭ-Ṭuʿmah of Qalʿat al-Maḍīq, and Muḥammad an-Najm and al-Ḥājj ʿAbdū Quṭaynī of Khān Shaykhūn.[37] These militants, who raised the peasants of numerous villages to their feet, stemmed from a rural region lying to the northwest of Ḥamāh where the yoke of landlordry had become especially burdensome.

At its base, the movement consisted mostly of peasants, who did not adhere to it at a slow or steady pace. In the words of Akram Ḥūrānī, "it was like a flood tide coming in and we never had the time to keep count, but all along the supporters of our party far exceeded its members."[38] In fact, in 1950 the movement was able to attract, on a conservative estimate, as many as 40,000 people from the countryside when it convoked at Aleppo the first peasant congress in Syria's history. In the same year it probably counted no fewer than 10,000 members.[39]

It struck roots among the Sunnī peasant-gardeners of Ḥamāh's outlying quarter of al-ʿUlayliyyāt, the Sunnī sharecroppers of the regions of Idlib, Maʿarrat-in-Nuʿmān, and Khān Shaykhūn, the Christian cultivators in the villages west of Ḥamāh[40] and in the Qalamūn region,[41] the ʿAlawī peasants in the country area of Maṣyāf, and the Druze peasants belonging to the Banī ʿĀmer clan and living in the Shahbā' district in the northern part of Jabal Druze (the peasants of the rival southern clan of al-Aṭrash had adhered to the Baʿthists).[42]

Why did the discontent of these peasants find organizational expression in the second half of the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s, and not earlier?

What made them receptive to the appeals of Akram Ḥūrānī, enabling him to harness their forces in his fight against the large proprietors? The peasants, especially in the plains of central Syria, had long viewed their landlords as a thorn in their flesh, but in the period just mentioned their lot changed noticeably for the worse. This can be traced to processes set in motion by the circumstances that attended World War II. The conflagration brought in large British and French military forces. Their heavy purchases of Syrian grain and other essential commodities; the concomitant precipitous decline in imports induced by the diversion of much of world shipping to war purposes, or by the great losses maritime fleets incurred through belligerent action; and the ensuing heated speculation and inflationary pressures (the market value of Syrian grain soared from £4.5 a ton in 1939 to £39 in 1942 and £54 in 1943),[43] produced unusual profits for Syria's wholesale merchants and large landowners. Much of this new wealth was used to improve the methods of cultivation and, in particular, to further the application of machinery to agriculture. Thus the installation of pumps drawing on river or underground water intensified in the postwar period, and the number of tractors used in farming rose from about 300 in 1948 to 977 in 1952.[44] The carrying out by the state of some irrigation projects, as on the middle Orontes, also facilitated the growing of cotton.[45] These changes did not redound to the advantage of the sharecroppers in central Syria, inasmuch as the ownership of pumps or tractors by the large proprietors enhanced their ability to exact a higher proportion of the produce. Moreover, by dint of the greater reliance on machines and a decided preference for seasonal wage laborers in the new cotton-growing areas, many of the sharecroppers were forcibly driven from their huts and off the land, thus losing the prescriptive right of occupancy and the guarantees of subsistence that they had enjoyed under the traditional arrangements.[46] Rural overpopulation aggravated their condition, driving them into a lower state of poverty. All these things stung them into militancy and goaded them into the movement led by Akram Ḥūrānī.

The sharecroppers turned to Ḥūrānī's party because it gave voice to the thoughts that for long had been inarticulately stirring in their minds. The basis of its program was to satisfy their passion for owning land through a reform of the agrarian structure that would limit holdings and redistribute property. It also sought to prevent their eviction from the land, and pressed for substituting direct elections for the indirect two-stage system and the introduction of "the secret balloting room" (*al-ghurfah as-sirriyah*) so that the peasants could vote as they wished without pressure from their landlord or his henchmen.[47]

In pursuing their aims, Ḥūrānī and his party had recourse to varying methods. Against landowners who were harsh with their sharecroppers, as in the Ḥamāh region, they did not hesitate to use violent means. Groups of daring qabaḍāys—tough young men—captained by ʿAlā'-ud-Dīn al-Ḥarīrī, a devotee and owner of a plebeian coffeehouse, went into action as soon as word reached them of an injustice done by a landlord or by his armed retainers. In the eyes of the peasants, Ḥūrānī and his followers took on a romantic aspect. Their oppressors were being paid back at last in their own coin.[48] In regions such as that of ash-Shaykh

Badr in the ʿAlawī country, however, where the yoke of landlordry was less onerous, Ḥūrānī's activists resorted to the method of "indirect incitement." "Why," they would ask the peasants, "are your villages without schools or roads or centers for health care or agricultural guidance? What are your deputies good for?"[49]

In furtherance of his party's ends, Ḥurānī worked more often than not through the existing institutions. On being elected as one of Ḥamāh's deputies in 1943, he proceeded to hurl defiance at privilege, raising the peasant question for the first time in parliament. In 1945 he called for the settlement of the bedouins and the abolition of the Law of the Tribes, and attacked the power of the shaykhs so fiercely that Ṭarrād al-Mulḥem, chief of al-Ḥsaynah, a branch of the Ruwalah tribe, fell on him, pistol in hand; but other representatives slipped between them. In the radical circles of the day he was now dubbed as the "daring" or "free deputy" and "the demolisher of feudal leaderships."[50] Thanks to his efforts and the support he received from his Baʿthist allies and like-minded deputies, the method of direct elections was put into effect in 1947, and the "secret balloting room" system was regularized in 1954. Earlier, in 1952, with ultimate benefits for the peasants in mind, he launched the project for reclaiming the marshes of the Ghāb plain. In 1957, after bringing to Damascus the sharecropping families that had been evicted by some of the beys and settling them in their wretched state on the front marble steps of parliament, he succeeded in pushing through a law prohibiting the ejection of peasants from their holdings. His central aim of transforming them into proprietors found partial fulfillment in the Agrarian Reform Law of 1958, which was enacted during his vice presidency of the United Arab Republic.[51]

Ḥūrānī's parliamentary successes were facilitated by the foothold he had gained in the officer corps: he had at an early date persuaded many of his sympathizers, who were of peasant extraction or humble urban origins, to enroll at the Ḥimṣ Military Academy. They now constituted a protective shield and a principal point of support and leverage for the peasant movement. But for Ḥūrānī, the tillers of the soil remained, as he put it in his speech to the 1951 peasant congress, "the foundation stone in the building of this nation."[52]

Indeed it was to a large extent Ḥūrānī's power to draw forth the interest and sympathy of the peasant masses that drew the Baʿthists toward Ḥūrānī and his supporters and brought about the "merger" between the two parties in November 1952. In essential respects he complemented their own leaders. Michel ʿAflaq and Ṣalāḥ-ud-Dīn al-Bīṭār were at bottom teachers. They dealt primarily with ideas and spread these ideas mainly in sitting rooms. By contrast, Ḥūrānī was a "man of the people," and at the same time endowed with a political instinct and a genuine gift for leadership, not to mention his good grasp of the issues of the hour.

CHAPTER 11

The Old Baʿth and the Political Rearing of a Rural Intelligentsia

IN THE MODERN HISTORY of Syria, Baʿthism has not been one force acting in a single direction or under identical influences but a mantle for a variety of elements that, for the purpose in hand, need first to be distinguished. In fact, there have been not one but three Baʿth parties which, though interlinked in a complex way, have been quite distinct in their social base, frame of mind, instinctive responses, the traits of their members and leadership, and the interests they served.

The earliest Baʿth formed its first Executive Bureau in 1945 and had its founding congress in 1947, but grew out of small circles of students and teachers who began their activities as early as 1939.[1] The party came to the political foreground, however, only after its merger in 1952 with the Arab Socialists. By 1958, with the creation of the short-lived United Arab Republic, its role had been played out, by and large, even though it was reduced to insignificance in Syria only in 1966. The Baʿth, that succeeded it was in essence a transitional formation and received its impulse from the secret Military Committee that took shape in Cairo in 1959.[2] It did not outlive the "corrective" coup of 1970, but many of its followers were coopted into the new Baʿth, which the coup's leader, Ḥāfiz al-Asad, built up and molded.

To the retrospective eye the old Baʿth, at least in its first decade, was powerfully moved by ideals. Self-sacrificing physicians, members of the party, acting on their own and without prompting from their leaders, traveled on foot in the 1940s and 1950s to provide free medical treatment to peasants in out-of-the way and hitherto neglected villages. Certain party activists sent promising sons of peasants to secondary schools in the cities at their personal expense or tutored them without charge.[3] There is, of course, always the danger of romanticizing the past or taking an unduly negative view of the present. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that youthful visionaries and devotees formed an important component of the party at that time, and gave it an emotional and dynamic force that is but faintly perceptible in the Baʿth of today, which since 1970 has been increasingly dominated by careerists and professional party operators. There is now more vying for places and perquisites than attachment to the virtue of self-sacrifice.

For the new Baʿthists, pan-Arabism has never been at bottom a live issue. By contrast, to the old Baʿth Arab unity was first in value and importance. In its eyes, membership in the Arab nation was the highest form of social relationship, and its followers were enjoined to hold it before their particular region,

sect, or clan in favor and esteem. In effect, it, identified itself as "the Party of Arab Unity."[4] To a degree this predilection toward fusing the Arabs into a single state is explicable by the background of the party's leaders. Out of the four members of the first Baʿth Executive Bureau that was formed in 1945, three—Michel ʿAflaq, Ṣalāḥ-ud-Dīn al-Bīṭār, and Midḥat al-Bīṭār—had been born to wholesale grain dealers (*bawāykiyyah*) in the outlying Damascus quarter of al-Maydān, the chief center for the grain trade of southern Syria and for the bawāyek—the capital's granaries. As can be imagined, the climate of ideas that surrounded the early stages of their life was that of the world of merchants. From the standpoint of this class, the fragmentation after 1917 of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman empire constituted an abiding hindrance to the old trade channels and the free flow of commerce. Its members resented being confined within narrow borders, and favored large and expanding markets, unencumbered by tariffs and custom duties or by a multiplicity of economic rules and regulations. In brief, to no other element of the population was a pan-Arab horizon more natural. Consistently enough, scions of some of the mercantile families who were or had been involved in long-distance trade, such as the Ṣamādīs, Mardīnīs, and Ḥajjārs, gravitated toward the Baʿth party in the 1940s, when it had not yet shifted to a pronounced "leftist" orientation.

There were two other characteristics of the Maydān suburb that played a role in shaping the nationalist sentiments of the founders of the Baʿth party in the heyday of their youth. For one thing, the district was closely bound up with the history of the great rising of 1925–1927. The rebel elements fought the French fiercely in the streets and inlying gardens, and remained unshaken in spirit despite a three-day shelling by the French artillery and widespread destruction. Al-Maydān was also marked by the varied character of its inhabitants. Elsewhere in the capital, groups that belonged to different faiths, sects, or ethnic stocks tended—with some exceptions—to have their abode in separate quarters. But in al-Maydān Christian tradespeople lived close to Sunnī merchants, or Druze ex-peasant mountaineers, or Sunnī former peasants from the plains of the Ḥawrān, or nominally Sunnī bedouins or half-bedouins from the Syrian desert. The proximity of such disparate elements could not but produce tensions that awakened the future Baʿth leaders to the necessity of giving emphasis to the deep Arab background that most of the inhabitants shared.[5]

It is not without interest that in 1942 a bawāykī or grain merchant from al-Maydān—Mūsa Raḥmūn—should be instrumental in bringing together Michel ʿAflaq and the fourth member of the first Baʿth Executive Bureau, namely, Jalāl as-Sayyid.[6] Raḥmūn, a neighbor of ʿAflaq, traded with Dayr az-Zūr, as-Sayyid's native town. A considerable agglomeration with no fewer than 58,990 inhabitants in 1942, Dayr az-Zūr was the center for the commerce of the desert and the Euphrates valley, and the capital of a province in the northeastern part of Syria whose traditional economic life had been unsettled by its severance from its natural trading region in northern Iraq. The new frontiers, drawn by Britain and France, had not merely defied the factor of trade but also that of kinship, having artificially separated, in this as in other parts of the Arab East, people belonging to the same families and clans.

To these circumstances can be traced the roots of Jalāl as-Sayyid's first feelings of sympathy for the ideal of Arab unity, which became livelier after he joined in 1933 the passionately pan-Arab but socially conservative League of National Action, and in 1938 the like-minded but clandestine and more spirited Arab Nationalist party. The depth of his commitment can be gathered from his close involvement in the smuggling of arms and ammunition between 1936 and 1939 out of Iraq's military depots through Syria and into the hands of Arab fighters in Palestine, an undertaking organized by the Mosulite pan-Arab activist Yūnis as-Sabʿāwī with the encouragement of Colonel Ṣalāḥ-id-Dīn aṣ-Ṣabbāgh, the leader-to-be of Iraq's 1941 military movement.[7]

But the high point in Jalāl as-Sayyid's nationalist career was the common cause he made with Michel ʿAflaq in 1942. A significant by-product of this union was the substantial support that the Baʿth party soon received from al-Khurshān, Dayr az-Zūr's most numerous clan, and from its allies, the Shuyūkh. As-Sayyid's father, a judge, had been a chief of the Khurshān, and the inhabitants of the town were still clannish in their habits of mind and course of conduct. More than that, the Khurshān were dissatisfied with the existing political order inasmuch as its advantaged elements were drawn from their rivals, the Albū ʿUbayd, who provided Dayr az-Zūr's mayors under the Turks and the French, and until the rise of the Baʿthists to political prominence.[8]

The pan-Arab tendency of the Baʿth party was reinforced when between 1945 and 1947 it gained the adherence of many of the followers of another group that had first come together in 1939 under the impact of the "disaster" that had befallen Alexandretta that year. With some exceptions, the new adherents consisted, at their core, of Alexandrettan refugees who moved into other areas of Syria when their district, which had a minority of Turks, was annexed by Turkey with the consent of France and in the teeth of bitter protests from its Arab elements.

Until 1944 the recognized leader of this group was Zakī al-Arsūzī, a graduate of the Sorbonne, a secondary school teacher and a son of a lawyer and middling landowner of Antioch, who belonged by faith, like the majority of the Alexandrettan Arabs, to the ʿAlawī sect. Politically, al-Arsūzī drew his inspiration from racialism—or, at least, this formed the central theme of the intense agitation that he led against the Turks in Alexandretta between 1936 and 1938, and that brought about his expulsion from the district. From the misfortune of which his fellow Alexandrettans became the victims, he deduced the need to arouse the youth of the nation. He thought of his group as a first step toward that end. According to his own account, in 1939 he divided his group into two sections: one political, which he called "the Arab Nationalist party," and the other cultural, which he named "the Arab Baʿth" (the Arab Resurrection).[9] He in effect maintained that, in the use of this appellation, he preceded the group that looked for guidance to Michel ʿAflaq and Ṣālāḥ-ud-Dīn al-Bīṭār and went initially by the name of al-Iḥyāʾ al-ʿArabī (the Arab Revival).

By 1944 Arsūzī's supporters had drawn away from him. They may have found his racism intellectually unsatisfying, or perhaps they thought that he was not sufficiently practical. Moreover, he was badly affected by the poverty into

which he had sunk: he had been prohibited by the French from teaching in any public or private school and lived in 1941 in a humble house in as-Sabkeh quarter of Damascus with seven or eight of his Alexandrettan disciples and, like them, slept on the floor, used books for pillows, and lived on a daily dish of ḥummuṣ or chick-peas.[10] He became depressed, irritable, bitter, and began to think of himself as a persecuted man, and grew suspicious even of his own followers.

But of more significance historically is that the Alexandrettan disciples of Arsūzī brought to the Baʿth of ʿAflaq and Bīṭār an ardor and warmth of passion that only injured people possess. At the level of the Baʿth Executive Bureau, which was elected by the founding congress of 1947, they were represented by Dr. Wahīb al-Ghānem, a physician and the son of a religious shaykh and director of an elementary school in the Arab ʿAffān quarter of Antioch.[11]

As is evident from Tables 11–1 and 11–2, all the members of the Baʿth Executive Bureau from its founding in 1945 to the party's merger with Akram al-Ḥūrānī's Arab Socialists in 1952 had their roots in Syria's main cities and towns. The only exception is Michel ʿAflaq: he and his father were born in Damascus, but his paternal grandfather hailed from the village of Rāshayya on the western slopes of Mount Hermon. Even so, ʿAflaq was basically urban in outlook. The peasants never constituted an object of his special concern. In his writings there is scarcely an expression of concentrated interest in the country's husbandmen. There are only observations of a general nature that implicitly relate to them, such as: "the [national] struggle . . . can only be based on the generality of the Arabs and these will not take part in it if they are exploited."[12] Nor did these writings breathe enmity against the landlords. This is in striking contrast to the basic bent of the "transitional" Baʿthists, who were nearer to Akram al-Ḥūrānī in their instincts and, like him, elevated the peasants to a central place in their line of action. Among the top leaders of the old Baʿth, only Dr. Wahīb al-Ghānem gave heed to the tillers of the soil and their problems.[13]

In fact, the old Baʿth as an organization did not strike deep roots in the villages. When the party held its first congress in 1947 there were reportedly only "one laborer and one farmer" among the 217 or so participants.[14] Most of the others were schoolteachers.[15] The remaining delegates were college or secondary school students, civil servants, lawyers, or physicians.[16] However, the majority of delegates were sons of peasants and laborers.[17]

Relatively few cultivators joined the old Baʿth subsequently. The considerable peasant following of Akram al-Ḥūrānī was not formally incorporated into the party's ranks after 1952, but continued to be attached to him personally.[18] However, the spontaneous humanitarian initiatives of individual Baʿthist physicians created much goodwill for the party among the peasants in some areas, particularly in the ʿAlawī region. More than that, whether in 1947, when the old Baʿth numbered only "in the hundreds," or on the eve of its 1952 "merger" with Ḥūrānī, when it attained a strength of about 4,500, the bulk of its rank-and-file membership consisted of students from a rural or peasant background.[19] This pronounced rural coloring of the party's base was not the result of calculation

TABLE 11–1
Members of the Baʿth Executive Bureau, 1945–1954, and the Syrian Members of the Baʿth National Command 1954–1958

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*No. of Terms Elected or Appointed*	*Year of Birth*	*Place of Birth*	*Religion and Sect*	*Occupation*	*Education*	*Class Origin*
Michel ʿAflaq*† ʿamīd (dean) (1945–1952) secretary general (1952–1958)	1945–1958	5	1910	Damascus (al-Maydān quarter); originally from village of Rāshayya	Christian Greek Orthodox; converted to Islam before his death	Secondary school teacher of history (1934–1942); minister of education, 1949, in exile in Iraq during the 1970s and 1980s; died in 1989	Sorbonne (1928–1932)	Mercantile upper middle class; son of a *bawāyqī* (grain merchant)
Ṣalāḥ-ud-Dīn al-Bīṭār*† secretary general (1945–1952)	1945–1958	5	1912	Damascus (al-Maydān quarter)	Muslim Sunnī	Secondary school teacher of physics (1935–1942); member of parliament (1945–1958); minister of foreign affairs (1956–1958); minister of guidance, UAR (1958–1959); prime minister four times in the middle 1960s; in exile in France 1970–1980; assassinated in Paris, July 22, 1980	Sorbonne (1929–1934)	Religious and mercantile upper middle class; descendant of a long line of *ʿulamāʾ*; son of a *bawāyqī* (grain merchant) and farm owner
Jalāl as-Sayyid* chief of the Euphrates branch	1945–1954	4	1913	Dayr az-Zūr	Muslim Sunnī	Successively government official, dealer in real estate, middle landowner; member of parliament 1949–1950 and 1954–1958.	Secondary, Dayr az-Zūr	Landed upper middle class; son of a judge and chief of a section of the Dayr az-Zūr clan of al-Khurshān

TABLE 11–1 (Continued)

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*No. of Terms Elected or Appointed*	*Year of Birth*	*Place of Birth*	*Religion and Sect*	*Occupation*	*Education*	*Class Origin*
Midḥat al-Bīṭār* chief of the Damascus branch	1945–1947 1949–1952	2	1913	Damascus (al-Maydān quarter)	Muslim Sunnī	Physician	Medical school, Syrian University, Damascus	Religious and mercantile upper middle class; son of a *bawāyqī* (grain merchant)
Wahīb al-Ghānem* chief of the Latakia branch	1947–1952	2	1919	Antioch	Muslim ʿAlawī	Physician; member of parliament 1954–1958 and 1961–1963; minister of state and health minister 1955–1956	Medical school, Syrian University, Damascus	Religious middle class; son of a religious shaykh and of a director of an elementary (ʿAlawī) school in the Arab al-ʿAffān quarter of Antioch
Faysal ar-Rikbī* chief of the Ḥamāh branch	1949–1952	1	1921	Ḥamāh	Muslim Sunnī	Physician; member of parliament 1958–1959; owner of a hospital in Ḥamāh in recent decades.	Medical school, Damascus; training in surgery in Switzerland, France, and England	Official middle class; son of a finance ministry official.

ʿAbd-ur-Raḥmān al-Mārdīnī* chief of the Damascus branch (1952–1958)	1949–1952	1	1921	Damascus (al-Qanawāt quarter)	Muslim Sunnī	Lawyer; secretary, Lawyers' Association, 1953–1956; governor of Damascus, 1963–1964; head of Court of Cassation, 1976–1983	Law school, Damascus	Religious mercantile middle class; son of an exporter (until 1916) of Damascene cotton goods to the Ottoman empire, turned religious scholar living on revenues from breeding sheep tended by bedouins in the Syrian desert
Akram Ḥūrānī*† leader of the Arab Socialists prior to 1952	1952–1958	2	1912	Ḥamāh	Muslim Sunnī	Lawyer-politician; minister of agriculture 1949; member of parliament 1943–1963 with some interruptions; speaker, 1957–1958; vice president UAR 1958–1959; in exile from the early 1980s until his death in 1996.	Law school, Damascus	Landed upper middle class; descendant of a family that founded the Rifaʿī mystic order in the Ḥamāh region; son of a religious shaykh
Anṭūn Maqdisī* an Arab Socialist prior to 1952	1952–1954	1	1914	Yabrūd, a rural town in the Qalamūn region	Christian Greek Orthodox	College professor	College of Arts, Damascus, Licentiate's degree in philosophy from Montpelier	Trading middle class, son of a tanner

Note: From 1945 the Executive Bureau was the party's highest leading body. In 1954 its role was taken over by the National Command, which was formed in that year. Simultaneously a subordinate Regional Command was set up.

*Members of the Baʿth Executive Bureau, 1945–1954

† Syrian members of the Baʿth National Command, 1954–1958

TABLE 11–2
Baʿth Highest Commands, 1945–1958 (Summary of Table 11–1)

	No. of Members of Baʿth Executive Bureau						*No. of Syrian Members of National Command*		*Approximate % of Syria's Population (Including Bedouins)*
	in 1945	*%*	*in 1952*[a]	*%*	*in 1954*	*%*	*in 1958*	*%*	*in 1943*[b]
Religion and Sect									
Sunnīs	3	75.0	5	71.4	3	60.0	2	66.7	72.7[b]
ʿAlawīs			1	14.3					10.0
Druze									2.7
Ismāʿīlīs									0.9
Shīʿīs (Twelvers)									0.4
Yazīdīs									0.1
Jews									0.9
Greek Orthodox	1	25.0	1	14.3	2	40.0	1	33.3	4.2[c]
Other Christians									8.1[c]
Total	4	100.0	7	100.0	5	100.0	3	100.0	100.0
Place of Birth									
Villages					1	20.0			
Lesser towns									
Main cities & towns[d]		100.0		100.0		80.0		100.0	
Damascus	3		4		2		2		
Aleppo									
Ḥimṣ									
Ḥamāh			1		1		1		
Latakia									
Antioch			1						
Dayr a-Zūr	1		1		1				
Total	4	100.0	7		5	100.0	3	100.0	

Education	No. of Individuals[e]
College	8
Secondary	1
Elementary	
Total	9

Sex	
Males	9
Females	
Total	9

Occupation	No. of Individuals[e]
Army officers	
Civilians	
Schoolteachers	2
College professor	1
Lawyer	1
Lawyer-politician	1
Physicians	3
Government official	1
	9

Age in Year of First Accession to Command	No. of Individuals[e]
28–29 years	4
30–34 years	2
35–40 years	3
Total	9

Class Origin	No. of Individuals[e]	%
Classes of low income		
Classes of lower middle income		
Classes of middling income	3	33.3
Tanner	1	
Religious shaykh	1	
Landed religious shaykh	1	
Classes of upper middle income	6	66.7
Landed religious shaykh	1	
Landed judge	1	
Merchants and ʿulamāʾ	2	
Merchants	2	
Total	9	100.0

[a]Before the "merger" between the Baʿth and Arab Socialists.

[b]The percentages are based on figures cited in Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon*. In computing the percentages account was taken of the bedouins, who are classified here as Sunnīs.

[c]According to Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Population Census, 1960* (pp. 18–19), all the Christians in 1960 made up only 7.9 percent of the population.

[d]Cities and towns with populations of more than 50,000 in 1945 or 1958.

[e]Individuals who were elected or appointed to the command for more than one term, are counted only once.

on the part of its leadership but developed in a natural manner, the message of the party having found a greater response among the students from the villages and rural towns than among those from the cities, and especially among sons of relatively well-off Druze, Ismaʿīlī, ʿAlawī, and Christian Orthodox peasants. From the standpoint of these students, as members of minorities and descendants of a long neglected and subdued class, the old Baʿth, with its proclivity against social injustice, its censure of discrimination between the sects, and its emphasis on their Arabness rather than religion, represented potentially a qualitative break with existing conditions for their communities and an ascent to a life in which they would be on a par with all other citizens.

The obvious explanation for the preponderant numerical weight of students in the old Baʿth lies in the centrality of schoolteachers in the life of the party. Its two foremost guides—ʿAflaq and al-Bīṭār—were themselves educators. Moreover, many of the founders of the party's branches and sub-branches in the provinces were concurrently founders or principals of private schools, such as Muwaffaq ash-Sharʿ (a cousin of the present minister for foreign affairs), Manṣūr al-Aṭrash, Maḥmūd al-Yūnis, William Khūrī, Najm-ud-Dīn Ṣāliḥ, and Wāʾil Ismāʿīl, founders or leaders, respectively, of the party's branches or sub-branches in the Ḥawrān, the Druze Mountain, the ʿAlawī region of Shaykh Badr, the Tall Kalakh territory, the ʿAlawī Draykish district, and in Qirdāḥah, President Asad's native village.[20]

All these provincial party leaders were sons of small peasant proprietors, except for Manṣūr al-Aṭrash, a scion of the chief figure in the great Revolt of 1925–1927. Some of them also stemmed from village notables. Thus Maḥmūd al-Yūnis was the son of the mukhtār or headman of the village of Brīṣīn. Again, Wāʾil Ismāʿīl descended from the leader of one of the two socially dominant clans in Qirdāḥah, that of al-Ḥassūn. But the main point is that the top Baʿthists viewed the party as an essentially educative force and oriented it toward the molding of youth in accordance with the pan-Arab ideal. Youth was to constitute the principal element of the party because, from their standpoint the renewal of the nation could only come from youth. The dash, the idealism, and the selflessness that they thought were characteristic of youth had to be pressed into the service of the party, and the party itself was to become a portrait in miniature of the hoped for nation state.[21]

Interestingly enough, Akram al-Ḥūrānī viewed the concentration of the organizational effort of the old Baʿth on students as a source of weakness. "A party," he affirmed, "is indeed a school but *for the people*."[22]

The "merger" of Ḥūrānī's Arab Socialists with the old Baʿth in 1952 was little more than a loose arrangement. Only about eighty leading Arab Socialists adhered to the "merged" party. Their rank and file remained passionately loyal to Ḥūrānī's person. In fact, the two constituent forces retained their distinctive character.[23] Nevertheless, the step added considerably to their influence. The base of their support grew at a rapid pace in the succeeding years, particularly in the ʿAlawī country.[24] There was a further expansion in their ranks in the wake of their 1955 decision to hitch their star of that of Egypt's ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir.

But their growth was uncontrolled and led to a severe inner crisis. By 1957, not long before the union between Egypt and Syria, the "merged" party had become—as an internal Baʿth report suggested—a babel of conflicting ideological currents. The report referred to the "breakdown of discipline," to "chaos" in the ranks, and to the transformation of the party into "an alien social institution." The report went on to lament "the profound chasm" that divided the leaders and the members at large. "The leaders . . . act in isolation from the party . . . and view it as a heavy burden and a hindrance to their freedom." In the ranks, doubt and defeatism had grown so rampant that they extended to the question of "the existence of the party itself: is it worthy of enduring or is it an experiment doomed to inevitable failure?"[25]

To this highly expressive report must be added the apposite remark made by ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir years later, in March 1963, during the trilateral negotiations for a federal Arab Union. He said, addressing the leaders of the old Baʿth: "My information about the party at the time of the unity talks—those held in January 1958—was that it had problems which were almost insuperable . . . , and we all imagined that you yourselves desired its dissolution."[26] But in 1968 Michel ʿAflaq openly affirmed that the proposal to dissolve the party had come as "a shock" to him.[27] Be that as it may, it would appear that in 1958 he and his associates yielded to the feeling that the cessation of the activities of the Baʿth in Syria was not too high a price to pay for the creation of the United Arab Republic.

CHAPTER 12

The "Transitional" Baʿth or the Baʿth of the 1960s, the Rise of the Lesser Rural or Village Notability, and the Ruralization of the Army, the Party, and, to Some Degree, the State Bureaucracy

THE CENTER OF GRAVITY of the "transitional" Baʿth was the Military Committee, which drew its first breath of life in secrecy in 1959. From the outset it sought to recreate the party—within the officer corps in an initial stage—but on a new basis, and to steer it toward a course at variance with that of the U.A.R. regime. As the path it chose was full of perils, it acted with such circumspection that until 1964 the Baʿth old-line leaders remained utterly in the dark about its existence and true purpose. There is some uncertainty about its beginnings and other aspects of its history due to the death or confinement of some of the main figures involved. One of its founders, Muḥammad ʿUmrān, was assassinated in 1972. Its first chairman, Mazyad Hunaydī, died in 1983. ʿAbd-ul-Karīm aj-Jundī, who played a key role in its history, committed suicide in 1969. Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, its real brain between 1962 and 1965 and Syria's strongman between 1966 and 1968, wasted away in the Mezzeh military prison from November 1970 until his death in August 1993.

In a 1985 conversation with the British writer Patrick Seale, Ḥāfiz al-Asad seems to have left the impression that the Military Committee was founded in early 1960 and that it initially consisted of himself and four other officers—Lieutenant Colonel ʿUmrān, Majors Jadīd and Aḥmad al-Mīr, and Captain aj-Jundī.[1] This does not appear to answer strictly to the historical facts. According to Aḥmad al-Mīr, the committee was founded in 1959 and its real founder members were ʿUmrān, Lieutenant-Colonels Mazyad Hunaydī and Bashīr Ṣādeq, and Captain ʿAbd-ul-Ghanī Ayyāsh (see Table 12–1).[2] In 1960, however, Junaydī, Ṣādeq, and ʿAyyāsh were discharged from the army and assigned to diplomatic posts abroad. It was at that point that ʿUmrān drew into the committee not only Asad, Jadīd, al-Mīr, and aj-Jundī, but also Captains ʿUthmān Kanʿān and Munīr aj-Jīrūdī. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that as from 1960 ʿUmrān, Jadīd, Asad, al-Mīr, and aj-Jundī constituted the committee's inner core or leading nucleus.

The composition of the committee changed over time. Beginning in 1959 as a body of four, it counted seven members on the eve of the September 1961 separatist coup, five on the eve of the March 1963 coup, and fourteen by July 1963 (consult Table 12–2). In August 1965 its role was taken over by the Baʿth Military Bureau. Except for the decline in ʿUmrān's influence, the inner core of

the committee remained the bureau's guiding nucleus and formed the backbone of the coup of February 23, 1966. It retained the upper hand until the ill-fated war of June 1967. Thereafter, a power dualism—or izdiwājiyyah in Baʿth parlance—developed, with Ḥāfiz al-Asad leading the party's increasingly pragmatic military organization, and Ṣalāḥ Jadīd its radicalized civilian wing and the state's intelligence and security structures. The dualism became manifest in 1968 and formally ended with Asad's coup of November 13, 1970.

The Military Committee differed markedly from the leaders of the classical Baʿth. In the first place, the latter were civilians and, on the whole, preferred open political relations to the clandestine scheming characteristic of military politics. The confusions and arbitrary practices accompanying the series of military coups of 1949 and the uncertainties of the period 1954–1958, when the army was partly in and partly out of power, had disposed ʿAflaq and Bīṭār to view the military establishment with misgivings and military coups as leaps into the unknown. At the same time, they had come to the realization that no political party could be really secure if it lacked a foothold in the armed forces. They thus established contacts with junior and middle-ranking army officers as early as the 1940s but on a personal rather than organizational basis, and opposed in principle their involvement in the party's decision-making process.[3]

In the second place, unlike the members of the Executive Bureau of the old Baʿth, who, before its "merger" with the Arab Socialists in 1952, were of urban and predominantly Sunnī parentage (see Tables 11–1 and 11–2), the entire inner core of the Military Committee between 1960 and 1965 came from villages or rural towns and belonged to heterodox sects. Sunnī officers, mostly with rural roots, formed on the eve of the March 1963 coup only 20 percent, and between July 1963 and December 1964 50 percent, of the committee's total membership, compared with a Sunnī participation of 75 percent in 1945 in the Old Baʿth Executive Bureau (consult Tables 11–2 and 12–2). Moreover, out of the nineteen individuals who at one point or another served on the Military Committee, only five or 26.5 percent hailed from Syria's main cities (see Table 12–2).

Significantly, four out of five members of the inner core of the Committee and ten out of all its nineteen members stemmed from the middling or lesser rural or village notability, and none from the class of sharecroppers or that of landless agricultural laborers. To lend substance to this observation, it is necessary to say something concrete about the social origins of the members in question, dealing first and in the briefest possible manner with those that had a lesser influence on events or a minor voice in the conduct of the committee.

The Social Origins of the Members of the Military Committee

Mazyad al-Hunaydī, who served between 1963 and 1965 successively as chief of military police, commander of the Golan Front, and director of the Internal Security Forces, came of a family that more or less typified the village notables

TABLE 12–1

Members of the Baʿth Military Committee from Its Founding in 1959 to Its Supersession by the Baʿth Regional Command's Military Bureau in August 1965

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*Rank on Accession to Committee*	*Year of Birth*
Mazyad Hunaydī chairman, 1959–1960	1959–1960[b]	Lieutenant colonel	1921
Muḥammad ʿUmrān chairman, 1960–August 1962 and March-July 1963	1959–1962; March 1963–December 1964 (in prison August 1962–March 1963)	Lieutenant colonel	1922
Bashīr Ṣādeq	1959–1960[b]	Lieutenant colonel	1919
ʿAbd-ul-Ghanī ʿAyyāsh	1959–1960[b]	Captain	?
Ṣalāḥ Jadīd chairman, August 1962–March 1963; de facto leader of committee from 1964	1960–August 1965	Major	1926
Aḥmad al-Mīr	1960–August 1965	Major	1920 or 1921[c]
Ḥāfiz al-Asad	1960–August 1965	Captain	1930
ʿAbd-ul-Karīm aj-Jundī	1960–August 1965	Captain	1931
ʿUthmān Kanʿān	1960–1962; in prison 1962 to March 1963	Captain	1928[d]

Sources: I am indebted for the biographical data on the members of the Military Committee to many Syrian civilians and retired military officers, including Colonel ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd as-Sarrāj, former chief of the Military Intelligence Bureau (conversation, Cairo, April 26, 1980); Aḥmad al-Mīr, member of the Military Committee, 1960–August 1965 (conversation, Maṣyāf, 3 December 1992); Ḥusayn Milḥim, member of the Committee, 1961–August 1965 (conversation, Damascus, 20 December 1992); and Dr. Sāmī aj-Jundī, a veteran Baʿthist (conversation, Salamiyyah, 28 November 1992).

TABLE 12–1 (Continued)

Place of Birth	*Sect*	*Military Functions 1963–1970*[a]	*Class Origin*
As-Sijn, a village in the Suwaydāʾ province	Druze	Chief of Military Police, March-July 1963; commander, Golan Front, 1963–1964; director, Internal Security Forces, 1964–1965; died 1983	Petty landed lesser rural notability; son of a local notable from the Banī Hunaydī clan
Mukharram al-Fūqānī, a village in Ḥimṣ province	ʿAlawī	Commander, 5th Armored Brigade at Ḥimṣ, March-June 1963; commander, 70th Armored Brigade at Kisweh, June-November 1963; minister of defense, January-February 1966; assassinated 1972	Petty landed religious rural notability; son of a village elder and religious shaykh from al-Khayyāṭīn tribe.
Damascus, Maydān quarter	Sunnī	Counsellor at the Syrian embassy in Moscow in March 1963, sided with Amīn al-Ḥāfiz in contest for power 1963–1966; retired	Trading middle class; son of a dealer in wood
Ḥamāh	Sunnī	Did not come into view in the post-1963 period	Manufacturing middle class; son of an owner of a detergents manufactory
Duwayr Baʿabda, a village in Jablah district	ʿAlawī	Director, officers' affairs at the General Staff, 1963; chief of staff, November 1963–August 1965; member, Baʿth Military Bureau, 1965–1968; in prison from November 13, 1970 until his death in August 1993	Middling landed rural notability; son of a sub-chief of al-Ḥaddādīn tribe and district governor under the French Mandate
Maṣyāf, in Ḥamāh province	Ismāʿīlī	Commander, 70th Armored Brigade at Kisweh, November 1963–1966; director, First Bureau (officers' affairs), 1966–1967; commander of a sector in Golan Front, 1967	Grandson of Emīr Maḥmūd, Commander of the Maṣyāf citadel and "owner of all the land" adjoining the town,[c] son of Emir Mulḥim, who became impoverished after his ouster from the stronghold by the French in 1920
Al-Qirdāḥah, a village in Jablah district	ʿAlawī	Commander, Ḍumayr air base, 1963; commander, Air Force, 1964–1971; member, Baʿth Military Bureau, 1965–1970; minister of defense, 1966–1972	Petty landed village notability; son of a peasant from the Kalbiyyah tribe turned chief of al-ʿAylah quarter of Qirdāḥah
Salamiyyah	Ismāʿīlī from the faction closest to Orthodox Islam	Commander, Rocket Forces at al-Quṭaifah, 1963–1964; head of Regional Command National Security Bureau, 1966–1969; committed suicide, March 2, 1969	Middling landed rural notability; son of a landowner and—for a time—dealer in timber
Alexandretta district	Sunnī	Director, Internal Secrity Forces, 1963–1964; discharged from service 22 June 1966	Petty landed class; son of a small farmer

[a]See Appendix for the civilian or Baʿth party functions of the members of the Military Committee who after March 1963 also became members of the Baʿth Regional Command.

[b]Discharged from the army and assigned to diplomatic posts abroad in 1960.

[c]According to Aḥmad al-Mīr, conversation 3 December 1992.

[d]Approximate date.

TABLE 12–1 (Continued)

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*Rank on Accession to Committee*	*Year of Birth*
Munīr aj-Jīrūdī	Briefly in 1960	Captain	?
Ḥuṣayn Milḥim	1961–August 1965	Captain	1932
Ḥamad ʿUbayd	Briefly in 1962; March 1963–August 1965 (in prison, April 1962–March 1963 for his role in the 1962 Ḥimṣ and Aleppo rebellions)	Captain	1928
Salīm Ḥāṭūm	March 1963–August 1965	Captain	1937
Muḥammad Rabbāḥ aṭ-Ṭawīl	March 1963–August 1965	Captain	1933
Muṣtafa al-Ḥājj ʿAlī	March 1963–August 1965	Captain	1928[d]
Aḥmad as-Suwaydānī	March 1963–August 1965	Major	1932
Mūsa az-Zuʿbī	March 1963–August 1965	Major	1933[d]
Muṣṭafa Ṭlās	March 1963–Ausust 1965	Major	1932
Amīn al-Ḥāfiz chairman, July 1963–August 1965, but largely in a nominal sense	July 1963–August 1965	Colonel	1921

TABLE 12–1 (Continued)

Place of Birth	*Sect*	*Military Functions 1963–1970*[a]	*Class Origin*
Jīrūd, a village in the Qalamūn region	Sunnī	?	Petty landed village notability; son of a village notable
Sirmīn, a village in Idlib Province	Sunnī	Commander, armored unit at Qaṭanā, March-July 1963; chief of Military Police, July 1963–February 1966	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
As-Suwaydā'	Druze	Commander, National Guard and Desert Forces, 1963–1964; commander, 72nd Armored Brigade at Qaṭanā, 1964–1965; minister of defense, September-December, 1965; member, Baʿth Military Bureau, 1965	Middling landed rural notability, son of a "martyr" of the 1925–1927 rebellion
Dhibīn, a village in Druze Mt.	Druze	Chief of a key commando unit and the radio and television stations' garrisons, 1963–1966; executed June 25, 1967	Middling landed class; son of a director of census
Latakia	Sunnī	Commander, Army General Headquarters' garrison, 1963–1965; commander, Qaṭanā military camp, 1966, and of People's Army, 1968	Middling landed religious notability; son of a religious shaykh and notable of the Ṣlaybeh quarter of Latakia
Kharbat al-Ghazālah, a village in the Ḥawrān	Sunnī	Chief, Damascus branch of General Intelligence, 1963–1966	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
Nawa, in the Ḥawrān	Sunnī	Chief, Military Intelligance, 1963–1965; head, Military Personnel Bureau, 1965–1966; chief of staff, February 1966–February 1968	Middle landed peasantry, son of a middle peasant and local notable
al-Musyfirah, in the Ḥawrān	Sunnī	Chief, Missile Corps, 1965–1966	Middle landed peasantry; son of a middle peasant from a locally influential Ḥawrān clan
Rastan, near Ḥimṣ	Sunnī	Commander, 5th Armored Brigade at Ḥimṣ, 1965–1968; chief of staff, 1968–1972; minister of defense since 1972	Lesser rural notability, son of a petty landed *mukhtār* of Rastan and former contractor who furnished provisions to the Turkish army
Aleppo	Sunnī	Acting military governor, March-July 1963; commander-in-chief, Armed Forces, July 1963–1964;[c] member Baʿth Military Bureau, 1965–1966	Petty official lower middle class; son of a policeman

[c]The post of commander-in-chief of Armed Forces was abolished in 1964 and the powers attached to it transferred to the minister of defense.

TABLE 12–2
Members of the Baʿth Military Committee, 1959–August 1965 (Summary of Table 12–1)

	Religion and Sect										
	No. of Founding Members in 1959	*%*	*No. of Members on Eve of 1961 Separatist Coup*	*%*	*No. of Members on Eve of March 1963 Coup*	*%*	*No. of Members in the Wake of March 1963 Coup*	*%*	*No. of Members, July 1963–December 1964*	*%*	*Approximate % of Syria's Population*
Sunnīs	2	50.0	2	28.6	1	20.0	6	46.1	7	50.0	72.7
ʿAlawīs	1	25.0	3	42.8	2	40.0	3	23.1	3	21.4	10.0
Druze	1	25.0					2	15.4	2	14.3	2.7
Ismāʿīlīs			2	28.6	2	40.0	2	15.4	2	14.3	0.9
Shīʿīs (Twelvers)											0.4
Yazīdīs											0.1
Jews											0.9
Christians											12.3
Total	4	100.0	7	100.0	5	100.0	13	100.0	14	100.0	100.0

Place of Birth		
	No. of Individuals	*%*
Villages	8	42.0
Lesser or rural towns	6	31.5
Main Cities		
Damascus	1	5.3
Aleppo	1	5.3
Ḥamāh	1	5.3
Ḥimṣ	—	—
Latakia	1	5.3
No precise information	1	5.3
Total	19	100.0

Age in Year of Accession to Committee	
	No. of Individuals
26–29 years	2
30–32 years	9
36–39 years	2
40–42 years	4
No information	2
Total	19

Class Origin			
		No. of Individuals	*%*
Classes of low income		—	—
Classes of lower middle income		5	26.3
Petty official	1		
Petty landed peasants	4		
Classes of middle income		11	57.9
Impoverished, originally big landowner	1		
Landed official	1		
Landed religious shaykhs	2		
Landowners	3		
Middling landed peasants	2		
Dealer in wood	1		
Owner of detergent manufactory	1		
Classes of upper middle income		3	15.8
Landowners	3		
Total		19	100.0

Origins in Rural Notability		
Nonrurals	4	21.1
Individual stemming from impoverished upper rural notability	1	5.2
Individuals stemming from middling rural notability	3	15.8
Individuals stemming from lesser rural or village notables	7	36.8
Others	4	21.1
Total	19	100.0

in the Druze country. His father was a small landowner and a person of consideration who descended from a clan of Druze warriors which, since the late 1830s, by virtue of the heroic exploits of an ancestor—Hazīmah al-Muhannad[4]—against the Egyptian troops of Ibrahīm Pasha, had provided the headmen of as-Sijn and other villages in the district of al-Majdal.[5]

Ḥamad ʿUbayd, who commanded the National Guard in 1963–1964 and briefly held the post of minister of defense in 1965, belonged to a middling landed family from as-Suwaydāʾ that achieved notability in the Druze Mountain largely on account of the "martyrdom" of his father in the 1925–1927 uprising and the prominence in its service of his grandfather, ʿAlī ʿUbayd.[6]

Mūsa az-Zuʿbī, chief of the Missile Corps in 1965–1966, sprang from a Sunnī clan of middle landed peasants that in the past had enjoyed ascendancy in at least sixteen villages in the regions of Darʿā and Azraʾ, and had for several centuries provided the shaykhs of the Qādirī mystic order in the Ḥawrān. The clan had its religious center in the same village in which Mūsa az-Zuʿbī was born, that is, in al-Musayfirah, about ten miles east of Darʿā.[7]

Aḥmad as-Suwaydānī, chief of military intelligence from 1963 to 1965 and chief of staff from 1966 to 1968, stemmed from an old Sunnī clan of the Ḥawrān, the Banī Suwaydān, which in the seventeenth century, before the conquest of as-Suwaydāʾ by Druze migrants from Lebanon, often furnished the head shaykhs of this town.[8] His father was a middle landed peasant and owned "one or two rabʿahs more than his neighbors." The rabʿah, a measure of land, was equal to as much as a yoke of oxen could plough in a day. He also owned—jointly with the father of George Tuʿmah, Syria's ambassador to the United Nations in the middle 1960s—"a mare of pure breed worth one hundred Turkish gold liras," which in Nawa, his birthplace, was considered "a mark of notability."[9]

The family of Muṣṭafa Ṭlās, the chief of staff from 1968 to 1972 and minister of defense since 1972, branched out of the Sunnī agricultural clan of Firzāt, which was well-regarded in his native Rastan, a rural town north of Ḥimṣ, but did not stand in local esteem as high as the rival clan of Ḥamdān, which had wider influence and identified itself with the Nasserite trend in the second half of the 1950s.[10] According to Ṭlās, his clan stemmed from the tribe of Banī ʿAbs, which came to Syria with the Arab army of the renowned Khālid ibn al-Walīd and settled in Rastan in the seventh century. In 1932, the year of Ṭlās's birth, his father, Shaykh ʿAbd-ul-Qāder, was the mukhtār or headman of the town. But he was not well off financially, much of his "movable property" having been confiscated on orders from the wālī or governor of the province in the late Ottoman period. He had, in Ṭlās's words, "embarrassed" the wālī and aroused in him a strong feeling of "ill-will and malice" when at a reception he showed far more magnanimity than the wālī to the son of the host. Ṭlās's father was then a contractor and furnished provisions to the Turkish army but, after the incident, as Ṭlās put it, "ended on the mat."[11] In time, however, he acquired some land that, like that of other proprietors, took on enhanced value after the building of the Rastan dam on the Orontes River in the period of the union between Egypt and Syria[12]

The history of the family of ʿAbd-ul-Karīm aj-Jundī, a member from 1960 of the inner core of the Military Committee, commander of the Rocket Forces in 1963–1964, and chief of the Baʿth Command National Security Bureau from 1966 to 1969, is inseparable from the history of modern Salamiyyah, which lies in the steppes twenty miles southeast of Ḥamāh at an altitude of nearly 1,500 feet. He was a descendant of Muḥammad aj-Jundī—"Abū ʿAlī" by nickname—a native of Bḥawweh, a village in the district of al-Khawābī northeast of Ṭarṭūs, who in 1848 migrated to the ruined site of Salamiyyah, which had been a center of the Ismāʿīlī sect in medieval times. For his part in the rebuilding of the town and for other considerations, "Abū ʿAlī" was chosen as its first mukhtār by the heads of the fifteen other families who had fixed themselves at the site and had hailed from his district or the neighboring regions of Maṣyāf and Qadmūs.

But from the outset and down to 1963, preeminence in Salamiyyah belonged to the Ummār or Emīrs or, to be more specific, to Emīr Ismāʿīl and his descendants. Although the Ummār intermarried with women from the Jundīs, rivalry between the two families became a tradition. The Ummār lived within the citadel, the Jundīs outside its gates. From the Ummār came the town's mayors, its parliamentary deputies, and largest landowners, from the Jundīs its judges, teachers, and financial officers.[13] The rivalry intensified when Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAlī aj-Jundī, who headed the family in the postindependence period, led a movement calling for the return of the Ismāʿīlīs to pristine Islam. Only about one-third of the inhabitants of Salamiyyah followed him, while the others continued, along with the Ummār, to regard the Aga Khān, a Europe-residing descendant of the fourteenth century Ismāʿīlī Imām Qāsim Shāh, as their leader.

In the meantime, the population of the town had been on the increase: it rose from about 6,000 in 1932 to 22,863 in 1960. The Jundī family had also grown into a clan of several hundred members, and become internally differentiated. Thus the father of ʿAbd-ul-Karīm aj-Jundī belonged to a less favorably circumstanced branch of the clan, and does not appear to have gotten on in any pursuit. He began as a farmer with less than 300 rainfed dūnums. Subsequently he took a partner and tried his hand at trading in timber, but ended up as a local revenue official. By contrast his second cousin, Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAlī aj-Jundī, the father of Sāmī aj-Jundī—the founder of the Baʿth branch in Salamiyyah—and Khālid aj-Jundī—the leader of the General Workers' Union and the Armed Workers' Militia from 1964 to 1967—owned about 1,000 dūnums and, as patriarch of the clan, had a manzūl, a large place adapted for receptions or assemblies, indicating the special status he enjoyed. The turn toward Baʿthism of the younger and educated members of the clan could be viewed as one of the ways by which they sought to undermine, if not break, the power of the clan's traditional rivals, the Ummār.[14]

Aḥmad al-Mīr, member from 1960 to 1965 of the Military Committee's leading nucleus, commander of the Seventieth Armored Brigade at Kisweh from November 1963 to February 1966, director of the Bureau of Officers' Affairs in 1966–1967, and commander of "a sector of the Golan Front" in 1967,[15] descended from the Emīrs of the Ismāʿīlī rural town of Maṣyāf in the Ḥamāh area

who, like the Emīrs of Salamiyyah, were originally "people of the sword" and of high social standing. His grandfather, Emīr Maḥmūd, was in Ottoman times the commander of the Maṣyāf citadel and "owner of all the land belonging to the town." His father, Emīr Mulḥim, was ousted from the stronghold by the French in 1920 and reduced to poverty.[16] He ended up keeping a store and selling coal.[17] His family's straitened circumstances were indubitably a factor in his gravitation toward the Baʿth party and his commitment to ideas that the socialist leader Akram Ḥūrānī came to represent.

Typical of village notables among the ʿAlawīs of the plains was the father of Lt. Colonel Muḥammad ʿUmrān, the Military Committee's chairman from 1960 to August 1962 and from March to July 1963. He was a religious shaykh from the ʿAlawī tribe of al-Khayyāṭīn and an elder of Mukharram al-Fūqānī, a village in the district of Jubb-ij-Jarrāḥ northeast of Ḥimṣ. As in the case of many other ʿAlawī rural men of religion, his way of life bordered on that of the peasants, but he had his own plot of land and lived comfortably. He was also a person of standing and filled a particular role in the village, the peasants turning to him for a way out of their disputes, for settlement of their inheritance or marriage problems, and for advice on other matters of concern to them. ʿUmrān himself came to enjoy a wider influence among the Khayyāṭīn peasants not only on account of his military connections or political role but also—according to a Syrian who was personally acquainted with him and lived in his district—by virtue of his marriage to a daughter of Sulaymān al-Murshid. A humble shepherd and a kind of rural messiah, al-Murshid had claimed prophetic powers in 1923 at the age of seventeen, and had suffered death in 1946 for his open defiance of the government, but his sect, al-Murshidiyyūn, continued to attract adherents, particularly among the tribe of al-Khayyāṭīn.[18]

In status and mode of life, the family of Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, the Military Committee's real first leader in the middle 1960s, surpassed ʿUmrān's people. His father, Maḥmūd, bore the title of Agha and, as a subchief of the ʿAlawī Ḥaddādīn tribe, enjoyed prestige not only in Duwayr Baʿabdah, his native village, but in the entire district of Jablah. The participation, in a leading capacity, of a close relative—Aḥmad ʿUlyā Jadīd—in the 1918–1921 anti-French rebellion led by Shaykh Sāleḥ al-ʿAlī added to the family's reputation.[19] Maḥmūd Agha himself, however, appears to have cooperated with the French rulers in the 1930s and for a time served as a district governor under them. He owned land in his village, but not enough to be affected by the Agrarian Reform Laws of 1958 and 1963. Even so, he was sufficiently well off to send all five of his sons to the French-run nondenominational Lycéé Laïque in Ṭarṭūs.

While at school, the young Jadīds, including Ṣalāḥ, joined the pan-Syrian SSNP or Syrian Social Nationalist Party. In fact, Ṣalāḥ's oldest brother, Ghassān, rose to become in 1954 the head of the clandestine SSNP military organization, while holding the post of commandant of the Ḥimṣ Military Academy. Indicative of the tribal influence of the Jadīds and the persistence of the power of clannishness was the gravitation toward the SSNP in the intervening years of numerous members of the Ḥaddādīn tribe. But part of the credit in this respect

belongs to the ʿAlawī Shaykh Ibrahīm ʿAbd-ur-Raḥīm, a dedicated SSNP convert, a headman of Baʿamrah, a village in the Ṣafītah region, and the father of the notorious Sergeant Yūnis ʿAbd-ur-Raḥīm, who in 1955 shot dead ʿAdnān al-Mālkī, then Syria's most influential military figure. It is not clear whether Ghassān Jadīd was involved in the planning of this murder: he had been discharged from the army a few weeks earlier. But the event was attended by dire results for him and his supporters. The SSNP was eliminated as a political force. Ghassān himself took flight, fearing for his life, only to meet a violent death in a Beirut street two years later. The loss of his brother under these dreadful circumstances left an indelible mark on Ṣalāḥ Jadīd's personality, and may explain to some extent his wariness, reticence, and roundabout political methods.

His real feelings about the ruin of the SSNP can only be a matter of conjecture. Precisely when he shifted his loyalty to the Baʿthists or whether he adhered to them prior to his association with the Military Committee are still open questions. According to the former Baʿth leader Sāmī aj-Jundī, Jadīd "did not join the party or take the [prescribed] oath." He admits that in the late 1940s Jadīd participated, as a secondary school student, in the life of the party's "circles," but only temporarily and merely as a supporter. Subsequently, "during his years as a cadet at the military academy [1949–1951] he cooperated with the officer-Baʿthists. . . but I had in my possession a copy of a list of the cadets who were members of the party and his name was not among them."[20] Akram al-Ḥūrānī asserted in 1985, however, that he had known Jadīd "from the 1950s when he was a junior officer."[21] It is likely, therefore, that it was to his wing of the party that Jadīd attached himself. Be that as it may, the point worth retaining is that as the star of Jadīd rose in the Baʿth of the 1960s, many members of the Ḥaddādīn tribe in the district of Jablah who had formerly turned toward the SSNP now veered sharply toward the Baʿthists.[22]

If the ʿUmrāns were notables at the level of a village and the Jadīds on the scale of a rural district, the importance of the family of Ḥāfiz al-Asad did not transcend the bounds of a village quarter, or to be specific, the quarter of al-ʿĀylah in the village of Qirdāhah. But Asad's background must be reserved for fuller treatment at another more appropriate point in this work (see Chapter 14).

The Causal Factors behind the Ascent of the Lesser Rural or Village Notability

The preponderance in the Baʿth Military Committee of officers with roots in the middling and lesser rural or village notability was ultimately a reflection of the fact that this class had been, by and large, on the rise economically and socially in the preceding few decades. This appears to have been to a considerable extent the outcome of the policies pursued under the French Mandate, namely, the partitioning of Syria and the creation of such rurally based entities as the ʿAlawī and Jabal Druze states, the related proliferation of administrative bodies,

the balancing of the country against the cities, the propping up of the rural notables to the intended detriment of their urban counterparts, and the alienation to private owners of much of the mīrī or state domain and the mushāʿ or commonly held village lands. These policies were the expressions of what Jacques Weulersse called the Mandate government's "active sympathy toward the rural populations."[23] That the class to which many, if not most, of the middling or lesser rural or village notables belonged—the middle peasants or middle landowners or holders of 10 to 100 hectares—may be reckoned among the main beneficiaries of French actions is suggested by the increase of its proportion of the total area of landholdings (including the area of the state domain) from a roughly estimated 15 percent in 1912 to about 33 percent in 1944 and 36 percent in 1955.[24] That the same class benefited significantly from the Baʿthist agrarian policies of the 1960s should be clear from the fact that its share of the area of fully owned private holdings came to 58.7 percent and of leaseholdings to 49.6 percent in 1970–1971, whereas the corresponding shares of the holders of fewer than 10 hectares were only 23.5 percent and 15.1 percent, respectively (consult Table 2–1).

By way of caution, it is necessary to add at once that the observations just made are valid only in the rough, and in a broad sense because the differentiation of holdings in terms of size does not entirely correspond with the differentiation of agriculturists into small, middle, and rich peasants. Obviously, peasants holding the same area of land could be classified differently depending on their other resources or means of cultivation and on factors such as whether their land was rich or poor or rainfed, or irrigated by flow or waterlifts or pumps.

The Stepped-up Ruralization of the Armed Forces

With the crucial levers of power in their hands, and intent on broadening the base of their support, the leading members of the Baʿth Military Committee proceeded in the immediate post-1963 period to accelerate and intensify a process that had set in in the 1950s, which involved the ultimate transformation of the officer corps, the armed forces, and the state bureaucracy into institutions with a strongly rural or peasant coloring. Or, to be more concrete, the influential members of the Military Committee purged these bodies on a scale hitherto unknown in Syria, ridding them of elements whom they viewed as hostile or of uncertain or wavering allegiance, and packing them with their friends, immediate kinsmen, or members of their own tribes or sects, that is, by and large, with country people or men who were peasants sometimes by function but more often by origin.[25]

The purge that got underway and the attendant ruralizing process attained a particular intensity in the armed forces. On March 13, 1964, 104 senior officers were discharged from service. Three days later, 150 middle-ranking and junior officers, including many commanders of battalions or companies, were also

ousted.[26] There were more shake-ups in May and July of the same year, and again in February, August, and September 1966. By the time of the outbreak of the June 1967 war no fewer than 700 officers or more than one-third of the entire officer corps[27] had been cashiered and replaced by reservists, who were to a large extent rural schoolteachers, or by inadequately trained officer cadets, often of rural origin. The short-range result was a strongly politicized but feebly disciplined and militarily ineffective officer corps, as the war painfully demonstrated. What added to the confusion and contributed to the disaster was the frequent change of the top leadership of the armed forces: in the period from March 1963 to June 1967 eight generals held the post of minister of defense and five that of chief of staff.[28] Some of these incumbents had been merely captains or majors when the Military Committee took the helm, and had little or no experience in the conduct of war. Even more serious was the disruption at various points of the traditional chain of military command and the shift of the center of gravity in the army to the chiefs of the politically relevant fighting services or striking units, such as the air force or the seventieth Armored Brigade.

One other aspect of the intensified ruralization of the armed forces that was more enduring in its significance was the ascent of ʿAlawī officers to the higher rungs of power and the concomitant decline of the urban Sunnī military element. It is necessary to offer detailed explanations for these developments.

Reasons for the Paramount Influence of the ʿAlawī Officers

What made possible the political dominance of ʿAlawī officers in the second half of the 1960s and in subsequent decades, when the members of their community added up to less than one-eighth of Syria's population? Leaving aside two general explanatory factors—the fragmentation of the social structure and the political ineffectiveness of the mass of Syrians—the question resolves itself into one of determining what made possible the decisive control by the ʿAlawī military of the Syrian armed forces.

First, it must be made clear that on the level of the officer corps the ʿAlawīs, contrary to a widespread impression, were not as important numerically as the Sunnīs prior to 1963. They derived much of their real strength from the lower ranks of the army. In an arithmetical sense, they had a plurality among the common soldiers and a clear preponderance among the noncommissioned officers. As early as 1955, after the assassination of the deputy chief of staff, ʿAdnān al-Mālikī, by the ʿAlawī sergeant Yūnis ʿAbd-ur-Rāḥīm, Colonel ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd as-Sarrāj, chief of the Military Intelligence Bureau, discovered to his surprise that no fewer than 55 percent or so of the noncommissioned officers belonged to the ʿAlawī sect.[29] How can one account for this state of affairs?

One factor that is frequently brought up in this connection is the minority-oriented policy pursued by the French from 1921 to 1945. It is indeed true that out of the eight infantry battalions in the Troupes Spéciales serving in Syria

under the French Mandate, three consisted entirely or substantively of ʿAlawīs and none was Sunnī Arab in composition. It is also true that out of the twelve cavalry squadrons on which data are available, only one, the Twenty-fourth, consisted of rural Sunnī Arabs from Dayr az-Zūr and ar-Raqqah, and two others, the Twenty-first and the Twenty-fifth, comprised some Sunnī Arab elements from the tribe of Shammar or from the towns of Idlib and Ḥimṣ. All the other units were drawn from the Druze, Circassians, Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians, or Ismāʿīlīs.[30]

However, the preindependence character of the army, that is, its character prior to 1946, cannot account for its 1963 or its subsequent composition, at least in any decisive sense. The reason must be obvious. In 1963 Syria had standing armed forces of about 65,000,[31] and the estimates for the men under arms that it had in 1973 and 1986 were, respectively, 149,000 and 400,000,[32] whereas the Syrian contingent of the Troupes Spéciales that it inherited from the French in 1946 counted only 7,000, and was by 1948 reduced to 2,500 men,[33] because the ruling landed and mercantile families of the day regarded the contingent as too large and too financially burdensome. Clearly, the strong foothold of the ʿAlawīs in the Troupes Spéciales cannot explain their present dominant influence in the army.

A more significant causal factor that was at work as relentlessly in the postindependence period as under the French was the depressed economic condition of the ʿAlawīs.[34] Also relevant as an explanation for the superior numerical weight of the ʿAlawīs, at least among the rank-and-file draftees, is the matter of the badal ("financial substitute"). Prior to 1964 Syrians were permitted to buy exemption from military service for the sum of 500 Syrian pounds.[35] In 1964 the practice was severely restricted and the badal raised to 2,000 pounds for holders of college degrees, 1,000 pounds for secondary school graduates, and 600 pounds for other Syrians.[36] In 1968 the maximum badal was increased to $3,000 and in 1978 to as high as $5,000, and had now to be discharged in hard currency.[37] In the 1950s and 1960s, however, the Sunnī of the cities, no matter how humble in condition, could as a rule afford to part with 500 or 600 Syrian pounds to avoid one and a-half or two years of compulsory service. But for the peasants, especially the ʿAlawīs, 500 or 600 pounds represented the value of several seasons of arduous labor. Moreover, peasants were seldom free from debt.

Ultimately, however, it was the rise of the ʿAlawīs to dominance in the officer corps that assured their decisive control of the armed forces. In this regard what worked to their advantage above all was the fact that, whereas the ʿAlawī officers were overwhelmingly of rural origins, peasant extraction, common regional provenance, and, after 1955, Baʿthī in persuasion, the Sunnī officers were hopelessly divided in political, regional, and class terms. There were, to be sure, splits in ʿAlawī ranks also, as evidenced by the break of Muḥammad ʿUmrān with other ʿAlawī members of the Military Committee in 1964, his assassination in 1972, and the contest for power between Ṣalāḥ Jadīd and Ḥāfez al-Asad in 1968–1970. But these splits arose largely out of a conflict of personalities or a

divergence in outlooks, whereas the divisions among the Sunnī officers were often of a deeper structural significance. Thus, the latter were clearly differentiated into urban and rural officers. Among the urbanites the most active and the most politically distinguishable were the Damascenes and the Ḥamawīs, and among the country officers the groups of Dayr az-Zūr and the Ḥawrān. The Damascenes were in part Nāṣirites but identified themselves mostly with the Secessionists, who represented a maze of discordant elements ranging from groups with roots in the affluent landed, commercial, and industrial parts of society, to Muslim Brethren, socialists, and independent leftists from the middle and lower-middle classes. The Ḥamawīs largely sympathized with socialist-minded Akram Ḥūrānī, and partly with the old elite. Some of the officers from Dayr az-Zūr and the Ḥawrān were Nāṣirites, but most threw in their lot with the Baʿth party.

By virtue of these divisions in the ranks of the Sunnī officers—and I am here simplifying somewhat a very complicated situation—Sunnīs of one persuasion ended up purging Sunnīs of another persuasion, or low- or middle-class Sunnīs joined with ʿAlawīs or Druze in purging upper-class Sunnīs, or rural-oriented Sunnīs joined with ʿAlawīs and Druze in purging city-based Sunnīs. In political terms, the Secessionists, the Ḥūrānists, the Nāṣirites, the group of the independent Ziyād Ḥarīrī, and the supporters of the Baʿthī Amīn al-Ḥāfez were successively purged between March 1963 and February 1966 and, with every purge, the Sunnīs in the officer corps decreased in number and significance.[38] Blows in August and September 1966 against the Druze—the groups of Fahd ash-Shāʿir and Salīm Ḥāṭūm—and blows in February 1968 against the remaining bloc of rural Sunnīs—the Ḥawrān group of Aḥmad Suwaydānī—if simultaneously reflecting a rift among ʿAlawī officers, left them in clear command of the field.[39]

In this struggle the ʿAlawī officers were greatly aided by their leading roles in the Military Committee and the Military Organization of the Baʿth party, which enabled them, in the first place, to act as Baʿthīs rather than as ʿAlawīs. But this observation must be qualified. The ʿAlawī officers were not always acting consciously as ʿAlawīs. They were, it must be remembered, also people of rural or peasant origins and acting as such, that is, acting according to the instincts and tendencies that their structural situation engendered. At any rate, because of their control of the Baʿth Military Organization, they were able to regulate the admission into the military academies and to shuffle and reshuffle the commands of military units in manners answering to their purposes. They did this at first—in the second quarter of 1963—with caution, but determinedly after July 1963 and more so from February 1966 onward. Moreover, by virtue of a tactic devised during the secessionist period—the period from 1961 to 1963—the tactic of planting Baʿthīs in clandestine military organizations of every coloring, they were kept posted on the intentions and plans of all their rivals.[40]

Also greatly contributing to their eventual triumph was the fact that they concentrated upon, and succeeded in gaining control of, powerful striking units that were of direct relevance to the making and unmaking of military coups,

that is, such units as air squadrons, missile detachments, and armored brigades in or around the capital, not to mention intelligence and counterintelligence forces.

Many Sunnīs are still in the officer corps, of course, but if they are important it is not as a group but as individuals, and more in the professional than in the political sense.

The Rural Penetration of the State Bureaucracy

The heavy influx of country elements into the officer corps and the armed forces had its analogue in their diffusion through the state bureaucracy. "From the moment the party appeared on the stage," wrote the former Baʿthī minister of information Sāmī aj-Jundī, "the caravans of villagers began moving from the plains and mountains toward Damascus, and the perturbing qāf [the peasants' mode of pronouncing the letter q] soon dominated its streets and coffeehouses and the waiting rooms in government offices." Party members and "their relatives and fellow tribesmen" had come to claim "the rights of struggle and kinship." "Dismissals," aj-Jundī went on, "became necessary so that appointments could be made."[41]

The scale of the movement from rural areas, which was in part related to the increase in agricultural unemployment, may be inferred from the rise of the population of Damascus from 529,963 in 1960 to 836,668 in 1970 and 1,112,214 in 1981.[42] The intensity of the flow of rural migrants was obviously much higher in the 1960s than in the 1970s: the annual population growth rate of the city of Damascus came to 46.7 percent between 1960 and 1970 but was only 26.3 percent between 1970 and 1981.[43]

As there are no statistics on the social antecedents of civil servants, it is impossible to be precise as to the degree of penetration of the administrative cadres by sons of peasants and other country people. But there is no question that under the Baʿth of the 1960s the gates of the state bureaucracy were opened wide to them. Their opportunities for employment increased sharply in the wake of the renationalization of big business in 1964, the more far-ranging nationalization measures of 1965, and the enormous growth in subsequent years of the role of the government in the life of the country. State and public sector employees, excluding the police and armed forces, increased from 33,979 in 1960 to 198,079 in 1971, 367,649 in 1980, 546,146 in 1985, and 717,387 in 1992.[44]

Impressionistic evidence strongly suggests that many, if not the bulk, of the new bureaucrats were from rural backgrounds. Indeed, at the bottom of much of the recurring discontent of the urban traders in the post-1963 period—aside from the adverse effects upon them of the Baʿth's inadequately considered nationalization decrees—was the fact that they frequently found themselves compelled to deal with state employees who were of rural origin and, if not hostile to the urban trading community, had little understanding of the intricacies of trade and thus wittingly or unwittingly raised all sorts of impediments in its path.

The Enhanced Rural Coloring of the Baʿth Party

The crowding of rural elements into the state administrative service was a practical consequence of the increasingly rustic complexion of the Baʿth party, which in turn was the outcome of the recruitment practices of the leading nucleus of the Military Committee.

In the days following the coup of March 8, 1963, the reconstituted civilian segment of the party counted a little over four hundred members.[45] Its military organization was palpably larger,[46] particularly after the calling up, by the leaders of the Military Committee, of Baʿthī reservists and their hurried confermentof the rights of membership on kinsfolk or fellow tribesmen or on friendly but nonparty elements. Similar practices led soon to a considerable increase in the numerical strength of the party's civilian wing. But in comparison to Syria's population, Baʿthī ranks were still extremely thin in August of the same year. This was acknowledged by the nominal Baʿthī head of state Amīn al-Ḥāfiz in his own manner. "The rulers of Egypt," he said, "maintain that the Baʿth party in the Arab Syrian Region embraces no more than 5,000 individuals. In reply we say, its members are fewer than that, and echo the Arab poet: She reproaches us for being few in number/I told her the honorable are few."[47] In fact, at that time, the party embraced between two and three thousand members.[48] Subsequently, however, its following multiplied several times over, and by the fall of 1967 it may have counted about five thousand "active" or full members[49] and probably eight times as many candidate-trainees and supporting members.

Turning to the social complexion of these members, can sufficient evidence be adduced to establish that they were, by and large, of rural origins? In 1968, in an internal publication, the Baʿth command provided figures on the social composition of the Baʿth party (see Table 12-3). These statistics are, of course, not conclusive as to the nature of the party's support in the year in question.

Table 12–3
The Social Composition of the Baʿth Party in 1968

Social Category	*Full Members (percent)*	*Candidates (percent)*
Workers	12	14
Peasants	16	28
Students	20	32
Employees	32	7
Teachers	16	4
Others	4	15
	100	100

Source: The command gave the average age of the full members as thirty-one and of the candidates as twenty-four years; the Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Min Taqārīr wa Muqarrarāt-il-Muʾtamar il-Quṭrīir-Rābiʿ*, pp. 61–62, and the Democratic Arab Baʿth Socialist Party (Ṣalāḥ Jadīd's followers), *Dirāsah Awwaliyyah*, Part 1, pp. 49–50.

They are silent about the proportion of workers, students, employees, and teachers who were from a rural background.

There are, however, other indications. In the first place, there is the frank admission by the Ṣalāḥ Jadīd faction, which held undivided power between 1966 and 1968, that the party had "a very feeble presence in the major cities" and that "most of the leaders of this cities' branches were from other regions" and could not build "genuine organizations" capable of attracting or mobilizing "urban mass support."[50] Second, there is the telling fact that in the 1960s the government had on occasions to bring in peasants from the countryside to counter the demonstrations and strikes that broke out in Ḥamāh, Aleppo, and Damascus. It is also significant that, out of the six hundred or so members of the Baʿth's Nationalist Guard in Syria's capital in 1964, only twelve were Damascenes.[51] Moreover, although the Sixth National Congress held in October 1963 identified the Baʿth as a "party for the workers and peasants" and directed activists to rely for support on these classes as well as on small "earners" and "revolutionary military and educated" elements, there is little doubt that within the cities the "workers" or "earners" whom the party attracted in the 1960s tended to be more often than not of recent rural provenance.[52] Much the same is true of the other elements.

More conclusive is the social composition of the party at the leadership level. As can be seen from Table 12–5, out of the twenty-four individuals who rose to membership in the Regional Command between March 1966 and November 1970, 54.1 percent came from villages, 33.3 percent from rural or lesser towns, and only 8.4 percent from the main cities. For the immediately preceding period, that of September 1963—February 1966, the corresponding figures were 37.9, 44.8, and 17.3 percent (consult Table 12–4). In both periods no Damascene had a seat in the command.

One salient fact is the descent of 31 percent of the "regional" leaders in 1963–1966 and 37.5 percent in 1966–1970 from the middling and lesser rural or village notability. It is also noteworthy that in the former period 44.8 percent and in the latter period 45.8 percent of these leaders were of peasant extraction, and that the majority in both periods consisted of schoolteachers or army officers, including army officers who had been schoolteachers. The underrepresentation of the Sunnīs and the heavy weight of the heterodox elements in all the commands will not escape notice. The figures in the same tables clearly reflect the sharp rise in the role of the ʿAlawīs and the relative decline in the importance of the Druze after February 1966. These changes are explicable by the purging of the supporters of the two Druze military figures Fahd ash-Shāʿir and Salīm Ḥāṭūm and the decisive shift in the balance of power within the armed forces in favor of the ʿAlawī officers.[53]

The Agrarian Policies of the 1960s and Their Social Meaning

From the standpoint of the peasants, the most significant steps taken by the Baʿth of the 1960s were the sharpening of the Agrarian Reform Law No. 161 of

September 27, 1958, and the accelerated redistribution of the affected landed property. By virtue of Decree No. 88 of June 23, 1963, ceilings on private landownership were lowered, being fixed at 15 to 55 hectares on irrigated land and 80 to 300 hectares on rainfed land, depending on the region, nearness to the market, method of irrigation, amount of rainfall, and, in the case of arboreous land, the age and spacing of trees (consult Table 2–4). Under the 1958 law the maximum limit had been 300 hectares of rainfed land or 80 hectares of irrigated or wooded land. In all, 3,247 landowners and 1,176,482 cultivated hectares or roughly about 20 percent of Syria's cultivated land had been affected. Under the 1963 decree, 1,372 other proprietors and 48,767 hectares also became liable to the reform. The seized estates were to be distributed to peasant families in lots not exceeding eight hectares of irrigated land or forty-five hectares of rainfed land. A more important new clause freed peasant beneficiaries from all but one-fourth of the price of the land, which was to be paid in easy installments to their agricultural cooperative and earmarked for its social, cultural, and economic projects. Another decree—No. 66 of January 1969—provided for the free distribution of private expropriated land and reclaimed state land in holdings of 2.5 to 4 hectares in the plain of Ṭār al-ʿAla, east of Ḥamāh, and the plain of al-Ghāb and its ʿAshārnah and ar-Rūj offshoots.[54]

More meaningful from the viewpoint of the peasants was the speed-up of the process of redistributing the reform land. The vicissitudes of politics in the 1960s, the uncertainty concerning ownership, and the flight of capital had, together with the usual sharp crop fluctuations, changed the conditions of husbandmen for the worse. Agricultural unemployment touched a high of 12 percent in 1964.[55] Subtle resistance from big landlords, foot-dragging by unsympathetic urban bureaucrats, legal complexities, and the shortage of surveyors and agricultural specialists had from the outset delayed the land redistribution process.

As is evident from Table 12–6, a relatively small proportion of the expropriated areas was distributed in the period of the United Arab Republic. In striking contrast, special efforts were applied to carry the reform forward during the "left" phase of the much-maligned "separatist" regime, when men sharing Akram al-Ḥūrānī's agrarian perspectives had charge of the process. In the Baʿth period expropriations were resumed in earnest during the first term as minister of agrarian reform (October 1964—December 1965) of Lieutenant Colonel ʿAbd-ul-Karīm aj-Jundī, an ally of Ṣalāḥ Jadīd and a root-and-branch Baʿthist.[56] But he was in favor of a collective form of land exploitation, and discouraged the proliferation of small-scale productive units. It was only in 1968–1969, during the tenure as chief of the Regional Command's Peasants' Bureau of Dr. Ibrahīm Mākhūs that the redistribution of land to peasant families proceeded at a heated pace.

A student volunteer in the Palestine War of 1948, a volunteer physician in the Algerian Revolution of 1954–1962, one of the more influential civilian allies of Jadīd, Mākhūs descended, like the majority of the core members of the Military Committee, from the lesser rural ʿAlawī notability. His father, a native of Mākhūs, a village on the road between Latakia and Antioch, was a religious

TABLE 12–4
Composition of Baʿth Regional Commands, September 1963–February 1966 (Summary of Data in Appendix)

Religion and Sect

	No. of Members	*%*	*No. of Individuals*[a]	*%*	*Approximate % of Syria's Population (including Bedouins) in 1943*[b]
Sunnīs	29	54.7	16	55.2	72.7[b]
ʿAlawīs	8	15.1	4	13.8	10.0
Druze	10	18.9	5	17.2	2.7
Ismaʿīlīs	5	9.4	3[c]	10.4	0.9
Shīʿis (Twelvers)					0.4
Yazīdis					0.1
Jews					0.9
Greek Orthodox	1	1.9	1	3.4	4.2[d]
Other Christians					8.1[d]
Total	53	100.0	29	100.0	100.0

Place of Birth

	No. of Members	*%*	*No. of Individuals*[a]	*%*	*% of Total Population*	
					1960	*1970*
Villages	18	34.0	11	37.9	63.1	56.5
Lesser Towns	22	41.5	13	44.8	9.4	12.5
Main Cities[e]						
Damascus					11.6	13.3
Aleppo	4	7.5	2	6.9	9.3	10.1
Ḥimṣ	4	7.5	1	3.5	3.0	3.4
Ḥamāh					2.1	2.2
Latakia	5	9.5	2	6.9	1.5	2.0
Total	53	100.0	29	100.0	100.0	100.0

Education

	No. of Individuals[a]
College	28
Secondary	
Elementary	1
Total	29

Sex

	No. of Individuals[a]
Males	29
Female	
Total	29

TABLE 12–4 (Continued)

Age Group in Year of First Accession to Command	*No. of Individuals*[a]
No information	4
27–29 years	5
30–34 years	11
35–38 years	6
42–44 years	3
Total	29

Province of Birth[f]	*No. of Individuals*[a]
City of Damascus	
Rural Damascus	1
Aleppo	2
Ḥimṣ	4
Ḥamāh	3[g]
Latakia	4
Dayr az-Zūr	4
Idlib	2
al-Ḥasakeh	
Ar-Raqqah	
As-Suwaydāʾ	4
Darʿa	3
Ṭarṭūs	
Qunayṭrah	1
Country of Lebanon	1
Total	29

Occupation	*No. of Individuals*[a]	*%*
Military Officers	10[h]	34.5
Civilians		
a. Members of Professions	17	58.6
School teachers	7 (24.1%)	
College professor	1	
Lawyers	4	
Physicians	3	
Dentist	1	
Engineer	1	
b. Others	2	6.9
Government official	1	
Bus driver	1	
Total	29	100.0

Origins in Lesser Rural or Village Notability	*No. of Individuals*[a]
Non-rurals	5
Individuals stemming from the middling or lesser rural or village notability	9 (31%)
Others	15
Total	29

TABLE 12–4 (Continued)

Class Origin	*No. of Individuals*[a]	*%*
Classes of Lower Middle Income		
Peasant-gardener	1	3.4
Petty landed peasants	8	27.6
Small landowners	3	
Religious shaykh	1	
Petty landed religious shaykh	1	
Petty official	1	
Impoverished local notable	1	
Classes of Middling Income		
Middle landed peasants	4	13.8
Middling landowners	7	
Middling merchants	2	
Total Peasants	[13]	44.8
Total	29	

[a]Individuals who were elected or appointed to the command for more than one term are counted only once in this column.

[b]All breakdowns of Syria's population by religion and sect are ultimately based on estimates made in 1943 during the French Mandate. For these estimates, see Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon,* p. 386. However, the estimates did not take into account the bedouin population which then numbered about 400,000 (ibid., p. 385). The percentages in this column include the bedouins, who are here classified as Sunnis.

[c]Including two who had converted to Sunnism.

[d]According to Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Census of Population in 1960* (pp. 18–19), the Christians constituted in that year only 7.9 percent of the population.

[e]Cities with populations of more than 50,000 in 1960 or more than 100,000 in 1970.

[f]Administrative divisions as in 1994.

[g]All from Salamiyyah.

[h]Including three ex-schoolteachers.

TABLE 12–5
Baʿth Regional Commands March 1966–November 1970 (Summary of Data in Appendix)

	Religion and Sect				
	No. of Members	*%*	*No. of Individuals*[a]	*%*	*Approximate % of Syria's Population in 1943 (including Bedouins)*[b]
Sunnīs	33	50.8	12	50.0	72.7[b]
ʿAlawīs	15	23.1	6	25.0	10.0
Druze	7	10.8	3	12.5	2.7
Ismaʿīlīs	6	9.2	2	8.3	0.9
Shiʿīs (Twelvers)					0.4
Yazīdis					0.1
Jews					0.9
Greek Orthodox	4	6.1	1	4.2	4.2[c]
Other Christians					8.1[c]
Total	65	100.0	24	100.0	100.0

TABLE 12–5 (Continued)

Place of Birth

	No. of Members	%	*No. of Individuals*[a]	%	*Approximate % of Syria's Population in 1970*[e]
Villages	38	58.4	13	54.1	56.5
Lesser towns	18	27.7	8	33.3	12.5
Main cities[d]				[8.4]	
Damascus					13.3
Aleppo					10.1
Ḥimṣ	4	6.2	1	4.2	3.4
Ḥamāh					2.2
Latakia	4	6.2	1	4.2	2.0
No information	1	1.5	1	4.2	
Total	65	100.0	24	100.0	100.0

Education	*Number of Individuals*[a]
College	24
Secondary	
Elementary	
Total	24

Sex	*Number of Individuals*[a]
Males	24
Females	
Total	24

Age in Year of First Accession to Command	*Number of Individuals*[a]
No information	3
27–29 years	4
30–34 years	12
35–39 years	5
Total	24

Occupation	*Number of Individuals*[f]	%
Military officers	6[f]	25.0
Civilians		66.7
Schoolteachers	9 (37.5%)	
College professor	1	
Physicians	4	
Lawyers	2	
No information	2	8.3
Total	24	100.0

TABLE 12–5 (Continued)

Origins in Lesser Rural or Village Notability	*Number of Individuals*[a]
No information	1
Non-rurals	2
Individuals stemming from the middling or lesser or village notables	9 (37.5%)
Others	12
Total	24

Province of Birth[g]	*Number of Individuals*[a]
City of Damascus	
Rural Damascus	
Aleppo	
Ḥimṣ	2
Ḥamāh	2
Latakia	7
Dayr az-Zūr	3
Idlib	
al-Ḥasakeh	
ar-Raqqah	
as-Suwaydāʾ	2
Dar ʿa	4
Ṭarṭūs	
Qunaytrah	2
Palestine	1
Lebanon	1
Total	24

Class Origin	*Number of Individuals*[a]	*%*
No information	1	4.2
Classes of low income		8.3
Peasants	2	
Classes of lower middle income		41.7
Petty landed peasants	6 (25%)	
Small landowners	3	
Religious shaykh	1	
Classes of middling income		45.8
Middle landed peasants	3 (12.5%)	
Middling landowners	5	
Middle landed merchants	2	
Landed religious shaykh	1	
Total	24	100.0
[Peasants 11 = 45.8%]		

[a]Individuals who were elected or appointed to the command for more than one term are counted only once in this column.

[b]The percentages are based on figures cited by Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon,* p. 386. In computing the percentages account was taken of the bedouin population, which is here classified as Sunnīs and was estimated at about 400,000; ibid., p. 385.

[c]According to Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Census of Population in 1960* (pp. 18–19), all the Christians constituted in that year only 7.9 percent of the population.

[d]Cities with populations of more than 100,000 in 1970.

[e]Based on figures in the official 1970 census.

[f]Including two ex-schoolteachers.

[g]Administrative divisions as in 1994.

TABLE 12–6
Distribution of Agrarian Reform Land under Syria's Various Regimes
(areas in thousand hectares)

Regime	Period	Expropriated Cultivated Areas	No. of Reform Benefiting Families	Distributed Areas	
				Rainfed	Irrigated or Covered with Trees
U.A.R	1959–1961	620.1	4,517	57.6	5.9
"Separatist"	1962 ("left" phase of regime)	46.0	6,507	88.0	4.4
Baʿthist	1963–1965	316.7	5,292	95.3	1.3
	1966–1969 ("left" phase of Baʿthism)	242.4	36,188	141.6	48.5
Total		1,225.2	52,504	382.5	60.1

Sources: Based on figures in Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1965*, pp. 311–12; and Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract*, *1971*, pp. 132–33.

shaykh, a landless cultivator turned owner of 100 dūnums of rainfed land, an arbitrator of local disputes, and a founder in 1945 of aj-Jamʿiyyah al-Khayriyyah, a philanthropic association—as its name denotes—for "the combating of poverty, ignorance, and disease" in the countryside, which eventually struck roots in about seventy villages in Latakia province and could take pride in the establishment of one of the first secondary schools for peasant boys and girls, the school known by the name of Ṭarafa b. al-ʿAbd, a pre-Islamic Arab poet. As a young man, Dr. Mākhūs took part in the activities of the association, often traveling on foot from village to village, and thus had the chance to familiarize himself at close range with the life and sufferings of country people. This may perhaps explain why he was placed in charge of the command's Peasants' Bureau and given a good deal of scope in seeing the agrarian reform through.

At any rate, according to Dr. Mākhūs, "more reform and state lands were distributed to the peasants in the course of six months in 1969 than in all the preceding years" of Baʿthī rule. This was done by putting an end to bureaucratic routine, involving the peasants directly in the process, and vesting the redistribution power in provincial or village committees of three, consisting of representatives of the local peasantry, the command's Peasants' Bureau, and the Ministry of Agrarian Reform.[57]

But there was criticism, even by Baʿthists, about the way things were carried out. The most biting words came from Sāmī aj-Jundī. "The agrarian reform," he said, "is the oddity of the twentieth century. . . . All the laws [relating to ownership] lost their force. Property became subject to the whims of the Agrarian Reform employee and the local party command. . . . Intercession by the minis-

ter on behalf of the landowner. . . rarely availed. . . . Local hatreds became the real law of agrarian reform."[58] The frittering away of property and the little interest the regime showed in orienting the peasants toward cooperative forms of ownership were also deplored.

The structural consequences of the reform and its effects on the living conditions of the peasants are discussed in detail on other pages. It will be enough here to refer to its general meaning and impact. It undoubtedly functioned as a leveling device, by reducing to a significant degree—at least in the short run—the proportion of poor peasants, and deeding over to many of them the parcels of land they tilled; but for all that, it left many others landless. It is possible to infer from the results of an official population and manpower assessment study for 1972—an exceptionally good crop year—that of the 907,705 Syrians active in agriculture, animal husbandry, and forestry at that time, 43 percent were farm owners and/or owners of livestock or machinery (including 2.8 percent who were concomitantly employers, the others being self-employed), 42 percent were unpaid family workers, and 15 percent landless wage or salary earners, or workers paid in kind, or unpaid workers laboring for other than their kin.[59]

Other data (consult Table 2–3) suggest that the main reward was reaped by the middle peasants or middle rural elements of the landed class, who constituted the party's bedrock support and a principal source of officers for the armed forces.[60]

At the same time it is beyond question that the Baʿthists of the 1960s, and especially those associated with Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, tried to bring to the fore the interests of the entire peasantry. They did not merely uproot the social power of the big landlords but, by reshaping the relations of the peasants with the urban business elements that controlled the markets in which they had to sell their produce, they attempted to alter the distribution of economic rewards in favor of country people. They also raised the landless cultivators' share of the produce by an average of 14.25 percent.[61]

Moreover, by establishing a network of local peasants' unions in the second half of the 1960s, they advanced the processes of organizing the peasants into an articulate class, furnishing them with the element of political education, and drawing them into the political arena. Over and above this, even though many peasants continued to live upon a slight economic margin, the peasantry as a whole acquired an enhanced standing in society. It will also be remembered that it was in this period—in 1968, to be specific—that the Euphrates dam at Ṭabqah was begun, a project that would eventually bring electricity to practically all of Syria's villages and, in many ways, assist in changing the face of the countryside.

The Downfall of the Mainstream Baʿthists of the 1960s and Its Causes

It remains to account for the downfall of the mainstream Baʿthists of the 1960s, that is, the Baʿthists who linked their fortunes to those of Ṣalāḥ Jadīd. From a careful look at the course of events from 1963 to 1970 in its entire cycle, it is

possible to infer that one of the principal reasons for their defeat was the instability of the direct or indirect hold of their leadership on the crucial levers of power during almost the whole period. This had its roots in a series of closely related or interweaving causal factors, including the fluidity of the social situation, the resistance of entrenched city elements lacking a stake in the regime, the unsettled condition of the economy, the tumbling of the party from one crisis into another, the recurring shifts in the balance of forces within the army, the disastrous effects of the war of June 1967, the prevalent atmosphere of political distrust, and the splits of the mainstream Baʿthists, despite their similar rural origins and similar rural orientations, along semiregional, semisectarian, and sometimes vague, indeterminate lines, which, in turn reflected the political amorphousness and social fragmentation of the farming people from which they stemmed.

In a sense, the history of the Baʿth of the 1960s is the history of factions. The internal party discords were never purely sectarian or purely regional in character. Thus elements from the major Baʿthī army groups—the ʿAlawī group of Latakia province, the Druze group of Jabal al-ʿArab, and the Sunnī groups of Ḥawrān and Dayr az-Zūr—were to be found at one point or another in almost every political faction. Often personal factors or aspirations for sheer power were at play. Ideological affinities had some role but do not appear to have been decisive.

To be sure, the labels "leftists" and "rightists" were freely tossed about. But the political conduct of the period's central figure, Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, did not point to a clear or consistent ideological commitment. Thus, in 1963 he backed the "Marxist" Baʿthists close to Yasīn al-Ḥāfiz, an excommunist, and the "democratic socialist" Baʿthists, led by Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī, but abandoned them in 1964. In the middle 1960s he allowed or shut his eyes to the formation of the Armed Workers' Battalions by Khālid aj-Jundī, the president of the General Workers' Union, who believed that the axe must be laid to the roots of the existing social order and sought the establishment of "the [sovereign] power of the workers and peasants." In moments of crisis the battalions took to the streets and acted as a shield or combat arm for the regime, as in September 1966 during the coup attempt against Jadīd by the Druze Salīm Ḥāṭūm, or in May 1967 when the merchants of Damascus went on strike. But in the following August, Jadīd broke up the battalions and confiscated their arms, maintaining, in the name of the Baʿth Regional Command, that they "were set up without the party's knowledge" and were used by their leader for his "private ends" and to "terrorize citizens and deprive them of their freedom." Khālid aj-Jundī was also accused, among other things, of "delivering the General Workers' Union to the World Federation of Trade Unions, controlled by international communism," without obtaining the approval of the union's general assembly as required by its internal rules.[62] Obviously, Jadīd's turns toward the Marxists or ultraleftists, or away from them, were governed by the circumstances of the moment or by tactical considerations; or, as Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī, the Baʿth Regional Command's secretary from 1963 to 1964, put it, they were "merely part of the game for power."[63]

It is indeed difficult to say with precision where Ṣalāḥ Jadīd stood ideologically. To describe him as an ideologue would be wide of the mark. He rarely made public speeches and was not known for his sharp opinions. To many he seemed inscrutable. Affable in manner and address, he spoke in a calm voice and seldom allowed his accents to give warning of his thoughts. The appellation of "radical" was, to be sure, fastened on him. But his "radicalism" appeared to be rather a matter of political expediency than an intellectual conviction. It is true that his closest civilian associates between 1966 and 1970 gloried in the names of "revolutionists" and "socialists," and used Marxist phrases. But their "revolutionism" and "socialism" left the impression of being overpowering passions rather than reasoned ideas, and in practice were almost exclusively directed against the larger landlords, merchants, and industrialists. They never stood for the abolition of private property, and to the end remained wary of too close an association with the communists, as the just-quoted internal party circular on Khālid aj-Jundī's activities suggests.

Ṣalāḥ Jadīd's conduct is more susceptible of comprehension if one proceeds from the premise that he thought of ideology as merely another weapon in the pursuit or retention of power. One leading Baʿthist, who had a chance to observe him in action and who, if unfriendly to Jadīd, is a trustworthy witness, was "fascinated" by his "amazing" ability to play with the various internal political forces, isolating his enemies from their supporters or making or unmaking alliances with his opponents, as the circumstances dictated, and giving all his actions an apposite ideological covering.[64]

But, for all his astuteness in manipulating domestic forces, he lacked a clear vision of the larger political realities. He was particularly deficient in his understanding of the Middle Eastern distribution of power. By allowing imprudent responses to Israel's recurring provocations on the borders and taking a militant line on the Palestinian resistance and the issue of a "people's war," which, from a practical standpoint, amounted more to posture than policy and scarcely accorded with Syria's actual capabilities, Jadīd unwittingly played into the hands of the Israelis.[65] The events that led to the 1967 war, which are beyond the scope of this study, thus spun out of control. The ensuing ruin dramatically changed the regional and internal landscapes, compounding his regime's problems and dimming its prospects.

The then defense minister Ḥāfiz al-Asad, who had been content up to this point to play second fiddle to Jadīd, did not—it would appear—at once grasp the meaning of the new realities, as his later version of the sequence of events suggests.[66] At the Extraordinary Ninth Baʿth National Congress, held in August-September 1967, Asad, according to a contemporary account of the proceedings, lent his support to the hard-liners led by ʿAbd-ul-Karīm aj-Jundī, who stood to the left of Jadīd and insisted on a firm adherence to the regime's militant external stance and the guiding principle of a "people's war of liberation."[67] By 1968, however, Asad had shifted his ground. Realizing the need for a new course more in keeping with the possibilities inherent in the objective situation, or moved by other considerations—probably by a change in the mood

of the military—he came round to the view that the regime could only ride out its difficulties by switching into the channel of compromise politics on both the regional and domestic fronts, thus enabling the country to concentrate on rebuilding and strengthening its defenses. Internally this meant, in essence, toning down the urban-rural conflict and conciliating the urban middle classes. Jadīd, who had favored moderation, at least at the regional level, at the just-mentioned congress, and who found himself "in a minority,"[68] later appeared to push for deeper internal changes, reflecting the bent of mind of the bulk of the Baʿth Regional Command and the party's civilian wing.

Differences in the viewpoints of Asad and Jadīd surfaced even before the June war. In February 1967, for example, Asad was reportedly resentful at the cashiering of officers engineered by partisans of Jadīd "for personal vengeance," and was said to regard such actions as weakening the Syrian army.[69] But this and later disagreements in 1967, including those over responsibility for the military defeat or the direction of the postwar policy, were disagreements between two men who were still on the same team. There is some uncertainty about the real meaning of the dismissal in February 1968 of 160 officers, including Chief of Staff Aḥmad as-Suwaydānī and the bulk of his Sunnī Ḥawrān army group.[70] This initiative was interpreted at the time as a blow against Jadīd,[71] but it could well have served his interests, as the Ḥawrān (and Dayr az-Zūr) army groups had "abandoned" him at the Extraordinary Ninth Baʿth National Congress held in August-September 1967, driven—it was explained—by "the certitude that Jadīd was seeking to eliminate them one after the other."[72] But Asad benefited from a by-product of the purge of the Ḥawrānīs—the appointment as chief of staff of Muṣṭafa Ṭlās,[73] who, though by no means a heavyweight, could be counted upon to carry out faithfully Asad's will. At the same time, it is necessary not to lose sight of the fact that the purge added markedly to the already preponderant power of the ʿAlawīs in the officer corps.

The conflict between Asad and Jadīd came to a high point at the Fourth Baʿth Regional Congress held in September-October 1968. At this meeting the military supporters of Asad and the military friends of Muḥammad ʿUmrān, whose leader had broken with Jadīd in December 1964, joined forces and gained control of the Baʿth Military Bureau.[74] On the other hand, except for Asad and Ṭlās, all the members of the Baʿth Regional Command elected at the congress were partisans of Jadīd. It was shortly thereafter that Asad, referring to the new command, tersely declared : "I do not recognize this political leadership!"[75] This marks the beginning of what in party literature is called izdiwājiyyat-is-sulṭah or "power dualism."

Before thus showing his teeth, Asad had been quietly broadening and deepening his base of support in the armed forces. Later, the followers of Jadīd would charge that Asad had from the middle 1960s "turned the air force—and the civil air service—into a closed fief and a power center for himself and his supporters." They would also maintain that he won over to his side the members of the military "who had been negligent in the June war, taking them under his wing and shielding them from being called to account, as the party de-

manded." In the autumn of 1968, as the period of "dual power" set in, they went on, he "closed the army in the face of the party" and began forming the first elements of what would after 1970 develop into "entire military units resting on sectarian, tribal, and kinship bases."[76]

At an initial stage, Asad, opting for an indirect approach, refrained from overturning Jadīd forcibly or bringing the party's civilian wing to its knees. He had to exercise caution, as the powerful seventieth Armored Brigade was still loyal to Jadīd. A situation that might compel him to pit the air force against this unit raised the specter of civil war and had to be avoided at all costs.

However, on February 25, 1969, in an attempt to thwart the holding of an extraordinary session of the Fourth Baʿth Regional Congress, which he feared would be inimical to his interests, he arrested the leaders of the party's powerful Latakia branch and took steps to cut off the Regional Command from the party organizations in other provinces. With the obvious intent of ridding the media of the Command's influence, he also seized the offices of the daily newspapers and the radio and television stations. The Regional Command responded on February 28 with a call for defiance, denouncing "the illegitimate measures of the minister of defense" and insisting on the need to convene the emergency party session. It warned that, by virtue of Asad's actions, "the helm of state power was no longer in the hands of the party."[77] On March 2, ʿAbd-ul-Karīm aj-Jundī, head of the Command's National Security Bureau, sorely distressed by the dispute within the regime, took his own life.[78] A few days later, the Baʿth auxiliary organizations, including the Peasants' General Union, lent their voice to the Regional Command's criticism deploring the "interference of the military in the affairs of the party leadership and the institutions of the government."[79]

Asad, apparently unsure of the strength of his position, decided not to push matters to a showdown. The extraordinary session of the Fourth Regional Congress was held in late March and a compromise-minded Political Bureau, including the supporters of Jadīd and Asad, was set up to run the country.[80]

The uneasy balance between the two leaders lasted until mid-October 1970, when Asad, now bent on securing undivided power, transferred Colonel ʿIzzat Jadīd, a crucial ally but not a relation of Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, from the command of the important seventieth Armored Brigade to the Operations' Bureau at the General Staff, and proceeded to purge or demote Jadīd's remaining supporters in the army.[81]

The revival of the regime's inner crisis may or may not have been related to the failure of Syria's armed support of the Palestinian Resistance in its conflict in the preceding September with Jordan's monarchy. Later Asad would maintain that he had given his assent to the decision to intervene in the Jordan crisis and that on this issue he and Jadīd were of one mind.[82] In their account of the events, the followers of Jadīd deplored "the negative role of the minister of defense" and charged him with "aborting the decision of the Party Command to protect the Resistance."[83] This clearly refers to Asad's refusal to call up air cover for Syria's military operation. But committing the air force would have undermined the political leadership's own assertion at the time that Syria's

army was not involved in the fighting and that the intervening armored column belonged to the Palestine Liberation Army. Given the unfavorable regional balance of power, such a commitment would also have compounded the problems that the ill-advised intervention had already created for the Baʿth regime. At the same time, it would appear that there was real anger among the army officers over what they viewed as "political bungling of the intervention."[84] Asad might have encouraged this anger or used it to facilitate his moves against Jadīd and the mainstream civilian Baʿthists.

The latter, bracing themselves for the worst, responded to the transfer of their supporters from sensitive positions in the army by convoking on October 30, 1970, the Tenth Extraordinary National Baʿth Party Congress, which determinedly threw behind Jadīd whatever weight it still carried. Its proceedings, which lasted until November 12, brought to the surface all the underlying bitterness between the military and civilian wings of the party. At one point, Jadīd, taking the floor, sharply criticized "the privileges enjoyed by the army officers and their possession of Mercedes cars and stately apartments in the district of Abū Rummānah and along the Baghdād Boulevard." For his part, Asad invited about five hundred officers to a special meeting on November 10 at Air Force Headquarters. "I would like you to know," he calmly told them, "that I am the member of longest standing in the ruling Baʿth party." "It is you," he went on, "who decide and settle matters and not those who are assembled in the Barracks Plaza [that is, the members of the party congress]." In a cold tone, he added: "The army brought them and the army knows how to deal with them!"[85]

The dénouement came on November 13, on the morrow of a resolution passed by the party congress to relieve Asad of his post of defense minister.[86] This sealed Jadīd's fate. He and many of his closest supporters were arrested and thrown in prison. Others vanished from view or fled the country.

No element of the population greeted this consummation of events with greater enthusiasm than the urban merchants. They had been developing an energetic campaign against the mainstream Baʿthists among artisans and tradesmen. They now sent demonstrators into the streets of big cities with banners that read: "We implored God for Aid—*al-Madad*. He sent us Ḥāfiz al-Asad!"[87]

CHAPTER 13

The Post-1970 Asad-molded, Career-oriented Baʿth

Qāʾid-ul-Masīrah

From the beginning, the post-1970 Baʿth party bore the mark of Asad's personality. His individual qualities—notably, his caution, flexibility, and political realism—accorded with its objective conditions, and exerted and continue to exert much influence on its development and orientation. Its present ideology mirrors more his personal views than the aggregate thinking of its cadres. Loyalty to him has superseded the loyalty to its old beliefs. To no inconsiderable extent the history of the party and its regime has blended into the biography of Asad.

As early as May 1971, the new Baʿth Command hailed its chief as Qāʾid-ul-Masīrah or "the Leader of the [Nation's] March," thus initiating the Asad cult. While allowing that "history is the history of peoples and not of individuals," it nevertheless insisted that "our people, because of their circumstances and special evolution, lay emphasis on the need for a leader . . . and have begun to see Comrade Ḥāfiz al-Asad in this role." Laboring perhaps under a delusion, the Command went on to say: "The rallying of the masses around their leader will not detract from the Command's own role, inasmuch as Comrade Ḥāfiz al-Asad, being a party member, interacts with the Command and is bound by its decisions."[1]

In the next two decades the party congresses and commands would, on appropriate occasions, profess feelings of elation for "the exceptional historical leadership" personified by Asad, and in 1985, scarcely a year after the "succession struggle" sparked by his physical collapse and temporary incapacity, the Eighth Regional Party Congress would go further and raise the watchword: "Our Leader Forever, the Faithful Ḥāfiz al-Asad!"[2] The congress also took pains to underline that "loyalty to him is loyalty to the party and to the people and their cause," and warned that "a breach of this loyalty, in whatever form, . . . constitutes a grave deviation which the party and the masses reject."[3]

The recurrent protestations of attachment to Asad by the party commands reflected the underlying reality of his overriding power. In 1975 Syria's prime minister, Maḥmūd al-Ayyūbī, put it bluntly in non-Baʿthist language. "Syria has one authority, one leader," he said of the president.[4] Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, not all the persons in Asad's entourage were disposed to view his virtual absolutism with favor. His own brother Rifʿat, who from 1971 to 1984 commanded the Defense Companies, then the strongest regime-shielding armed units, did not conceal his dissonant feelings in 1974 from a trusted friend from his native rural district of Jableh. "I love my brother more than my son,

my joy," Rifʿat confided to him with a distinct tone of bitterness, "and I obey him. Every time I call on him I kiss his hand. But, my friend, I have had enough being treated by him as a slave. I am not a slave! . . . Who is he and who am I? We are the same thing. Our interest is one. Our fate is one. . . . But he has only two eyes and one mind and he wants us and the whole people to see only with these two eyes and to think with this one mind."[5]

The friend whom Rifʿat took into his confidence and from whose account this quote is taken was Ṣāliḥ ʿAḍaymah, who at that time served under Rifʿat in the Defense Companies and later became his speechwriter and principal chronicler. Assuming the accuracy of the statement attributed to Rifʿat, it should not be inferred that Ḥāfiz al-Asad, who is known for his iron self-control and his gift for handling people, treated the other members of the small knot of persons surrounding him as peremptorily as he treated Rifʿat, if only because the latter, who owed his importance to his brother, was, as will be shown, far from discreet in his exercise of power.

At any rate, what bears emphasis is that since 1970 Asad's personality has become a controlling element in the life of the Baʿth party, and his firm leadership a significant factor in maintaining the cohesion of its cadres. But what other traits has the party acquired in his days?

The General Characteristics and Social Composition of the New Baʿth

Perhaps the party's most striking feature under Asad has been its rapid growth. From a total membership of 65,398 in 1971, it rose to 374,332 in 1981, and 1,008,243 by June 30, 1992 (see Table 13–1), in a country with a 1992 population of about 13 million. When due account is taken of the age structure of the population and of the minimum age requirement for admission into the party—fourteen years for "supporting members" and eighteen years for "active" or full members[6]—it should be clear that the party embraced in 1992 no fewer than 14.5 percent of all Syrians aged fourteen and above. When the membership distribution by sex is also brought to view—the ratio for men was 75.3 percent and for women 24.7 percent in the year under reference (see Table 13–2)—the proportion of all Syrian males in the same age group incorporated into the party comes to as high as 21.7 percent.[7] It is worth mentioning, by way of comparison, that at the height of its power, the Communist party of the Soviet Union accounted only for 9 percent of the country's adult population.[8]

The rate of inflow of new members into the Baʿth party was highest between 1971 and 1974 when its membership almost tripled, but it also doubled between 1974 and 1981 and nearly tripled again between 1981 and 1992. This unusual growth did not involve the spontaneous gravitation toward the party of believers inspired by a cause, as often occurred in the 1940s and 1950s but, largely, mass enrollments set in motion by conscious decisions of the top leadership. What was behind these decisions?

TABLE 13–1
Numerical Strength of the Baʿth Party, 1971, 1974, 1981, 1989, and 1992

Category	*1971*	*%*	*1974*	*%*	*1981*	*%*	*1989*	*%*	*1992*[a]	*%*
"Active" or full members	7,992	12.2	22,548	12.2	53,433	14.3	159,640	20.0	219,645	21.8
Candidate-trainees[b]	3,931	6.0								
"Anṣār" or "supporting" members	53,475	81.8	161,825	87.8	320,899	85.7	637,859	80.0	788,598	78.2
Total	65,398	100.0	184,373	100.0	374,332	100.0	797,499	100.0	1,008,243	100.0

Sources: The figures for 1981, 1989, and 1992 were obtained from the headquarters of the Baʿth Regional Command, Damascus, in January 1990 and December 1992. The sources for the 1971 and 1974 figures are, respectively, the Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Taqārīu wa Muqarrarātu-l-Muʾtamar-il-Quṭrī al-Khāmis*, p. 20, and *at-Taqrīru-t-Tandhīmī*, 1975, p. 60.

[a]As of June 30, 1992.

[b]This category was discontinued after 1971.

TABLE 13–2
Female Component of the Baʿth Party, 1974, 1982, and 1992

Category	*1974*	*%*	*1982*	*%*	*1992*	*%*
Male members	174,659	94.7	346,315	83.3	759,176	75.3
Female members	9,714	5.3	69,315	16.7	249,067	24.7
Total	184,373	100.0	415,630	100.0	1,008,243	100.0

Sources: Same as Table 13–1.

One obvious causal factor was Asad's desire to broaden his popular base as far as possible and to use the party as a main vehicle for extending his influence. He also sought from the outset to render the organization more representative of the people as a whole. On December 5, 1970, a few weeks after his capture of power, he made plain that "after this day the Baʿth will not be the party of the elect, as some have envisaged." "Syria," he added, "does not belong to the Baʿthists alone."[9] In a July 1980 speech he dwelt on the basic guideline for membership recruitment. "Like the people . . . , the party," he maintained, "consists of successive generations with no end and no limit. No single generation . . . can view itself as reaching the end of the journey. . . . [After 1970] we gave this matter the attention it deserves and asserted that the party should attract into its ranks all the citizens, all the strugglers, who in principle are the whole people. This rule is not vitiated by the presence among the people of reactionary or opportunist or hostile elements, for the people, all the people, are at bottom good people . . . and believe in their homeland . . . and must within the bounds of possibility be drawn into the party."[10]

A parenthetical remark is in order here: by predicating the essential universal goodness of the people and implying that their basic interests are inherently reconcilable, Asad was not merely arguing in favor of spreading the net of the party's recruitment as widely as possible but was also trying to undermine ideologically the sharpening contemporary onslaught of the Muslim Brethren on his regime, an onslaught which, in some of its significant aspects, is intelligible within the context of Syria's old urban—rural conflict, as will be elaborated at a more appropriate point.

If, in principle, emphasis was laid on the desirability of opening access to the party on an extensive basis to the people, in practice joining the ranks of the party's anṣār or "supporting" members was far easier than reaching the stage of ʿuḍw ʿāmil, that is, of "active" or full member. Only Baʿthists in the latter category are entitled to vote at regular party meetings or to occupy leading positions at any level of the party hierarchy, or to enroll in the cadre-training party schools.[11] As is clear from Table 13–1, "active" Baʿthists comprised in 1971 only 12.2 percent and in 1992 only 21.8 percent of the entire party membership. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that while the number of "supporting" members increased nearly fourteenfold between 1971 and 1992, that of "active" members multiplied twenty-sevenfold in the same period.

TABLE 13–3
Distribution of Baʿth Party Membership by Provinces and Universities and among the Security Forces, 1979 and 1992

	December 1979				
	No. of "Active" Members	*%*	*No. of "Supporting" Members*	*%*	*Estimated Population of Province as % of Total Population*
Damascus city	2,852	6.3	17,489	5.4	13.4
Damascus University	1,044	2.3	6,615	2.0	
Rural Damascus	3,027	6.7	25,413	7.8	9.8
Darʿā	2,421	5.4	10,455	3.2	3.7
As-Suwaydā'	3,013	6.7	14,947	4.6	2.2
Al-Qunayṭrah	1,962	4.4	12,048	3.7	0.2
Ḥimṣ	4,332	9.6	37,192	11.5	8.8
Ḥamāh	4,753	10.6	39,680	12.2	8.4
Ṭarṭūs	4,530	10.1	26,494	8.1	4.8
Latakia	3,691	8.2	25,562	7.9	6.2
Tishrīn University Latakia	305	0.7	1,796	0.6	
Idlib	2,546	5.6	20,611	6.3	6.0
Aleppo	2,392	5.3	23,944	7.4	20.7
Aleppo University	364	0.8	3,022	0.9	
Ar-Raqqah	1,782	4.0	16,982	5.2	3.8
Dayr-az-Zūr	1,825	4.0	18,907	5.8	4.7
Al-Ḥasakah	2,248	5.0	19,896	6.1	7.3
Security forces	1,923	4.3	4,044	1.3	
Total	45,010	100.0	325,097	100.0	100.0

Sources: For membership figures, Baʿth Regional Command Headquarters; for population estimates, Syria, Ministry of Health, *Annual Statistical Report, 1980*, p. 9 and Office of Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1992*, p. 61.

This expansion occurred, interestingly, despite a large-scale purge of the party during Asad's "time of troubles": according to an internal Baʿthist report, no fewer than 3,243 "active" members and 133, 580 "supporting" members were expelled from the party between 1980 and 1984.[12] But it is probable that these figures cover a considerable voluntary withdrawal from the party induced by estrangement or a sense of danger.

In the quieter or more stable phases of Asad's regime, however, a potent factor was at work that was instrumental in driving Syrians in various walks of life toward the Baʿth, namely, a widespread feeling that the party was one of the more accessible means for moving upward in society. Moreover, among many

TABLE 13–3 (Continued)

June 1992					
No. of "Active" Members	*%*	*No. of "Supporting" Members*	*%*	*Estimated Population of Province as % of Total Population*	*Estimated Rural Population of Province as % of Total Population*
13,779	6.3	51,753	6.6	11.4	
5,436	2.5	22,733	2.9		
13,599	6.2	50,451	6.4	10.4	12.0
11,718	5.3	35,581	4.5	4.4	6.2
9,796	4.5	29,011	3.7	2.2	3.1
10,180	4.6	19,906	2.5	0.3	0.6
20,882	9.5	80,293	10.2	9.3	8.8
16,382	7.5	104,076	13.2	8.1	10.9
19,669	9.0	52,502	6.6	5.0	7.9
19,635	8.9	87,315	11.1	6.0	6.9
2,650	1.2	12,051	1.5		
14,161	6.4	50,185	6.4	6.7	10.9
21,013	9.6	61,125	7.7	20.7	14.7
4,277	1.9	11,954	1.5		
9,358	4.3	33,770	4.3	3.7	2.7
9,411	4.3	31,364	4.0	4.4	6.1
10,393	4.7	46,067	5.8	7.4	9.2
7,306	3.3	8,461	1.1		
219,645	100.0	788,598	100.0	100.0	100.0

peasants or elements of peasant origin in different regions of the country, and particularly in the ʿAlawī homeland, there was a genuine belief that the Baʿth was their party and truly represented their interests. These grass-root feelings facilitated the drives for mass enrollment ordered by Asad and his associates.

The ensuing impact upon the composition of the party is plainly reflected in Tables 13–3 through 13–6. With the density of the population in the various provinces in mind, it may be validly inferred from the figures in Table 13–3 that in relative terms the incidence of "active" and "supporting" membership was in 1979 and remained in 1992 lowest in the province of Aleppo and the city and countryside of Damascus. The under-representation of the capital is more pronounced than the data suggest because a significant proportion of the Damascus party cadre and of the party membership in Damascus University are not native Damascenes but hail from other provinces. Much the same is true of

TABLE 13–4
Occupational Composition of the Baʿth Party Provincial, University, and Security Forces Organizations in 1989, Excluding the Category of "Others"

	Peasants	%	*Secondary School Students*[a]	%	*College and Institute Students*	%	*School Teachers*	%	*College Professors*	%	*Production Workers*	%
Damascus City	40	0.1	28,263	9.4	10,297	9.8	4,310	6.5	21	1.0	8,611[b]	9.4
Damascus University					25,553	24.4			292	13.4		
Rural Damascus	6,726	6.8	19,408	6.5	4,182	4.0	4,270	6.4	53	2.4	3,036	3.3
Darʿā	1,727	1.7	20,718	6.9	2,618	2.5	3,586	5.4	2	0.1	2,585	2.8
As-Suwaydāʾ	2,073	2.1	11,753	3.9	1,481	1.4	2,808	4.2			5,957	6.5
Al-Qunayṭrah	1,099	1.1	9,669	3.2	3,308	3.1	2,092	3.1	6	0.3	4,972	5.4
Ḥimṣ	7,054	7.1	27,763	9.3	8,354[c]	8.0	8,012	12.0	280	12.9	10,957[b]	12.0
Ḥamāh	12,630	12.8	41,426	13.9	6,924	6.6	6,818	10.2	38	1.7	8,322[b]	9.1
Ṭarṭūs	3,648	3.7	24,114	8.1	4,045	3.9	6,945	10.4	1	0.1	4,519	4.9
Latakia	4,076	4.1	50,903	17.0	4,560	4.3	7,515	11.2			7,639	8.4
Tishrīn University Latakia					9,795	9.3			301	13.9		
Idlib	11,410	11.5	18,145	6.1	2,159	2.1	5,951	8.9			3,146	3.4
Aleppo	15,683	15.8	15,953	5.3	4,535	4.3	7,777	11.6	699	32.2	12,315[b]	13.5
Aleppo University					12,089	11.5			400	18.4		
Ar-Raqqah	8,738	8.8	6,899	2.3	1,976	1.9	2,019	3.0	75	3.4	7,687	8.4
Dayr-az-Zūr	7,842	7.9	9,424	3.2	1,609	1.5	2,361	3.5	5	0.2	4,714	5.2
Al-Ḥasakah	16,332	16.5	14,661	4.9	1,433	1.4	2,400	3.6			6,997	7.7
Security forces												
Total	99,078	100.0	299,099	100.0	104,918	100.0	66,864	100.0	2,173	100.0	91,457	100.0

TABLE 13–4 (Continued)

	"Administrative Workers"	%	*Artisans*	%	*Physicians, Dentists, and Veterinarians*	%	*Engineers and Agronomists*	%	*Judges and Lawyers*	%	*House-wives*	%
Damascus City	5,704	8.7	271	2.8	362	13.5	1,332	14.3	366	27.9	241	3.3
Damascus University	1,335	2.0	26	0.3	56	2.1	18	0.2				
Rural Damascus	4,188	6.4	2,227[d]	22.9	221	8.2	525	5.7	49	3.7	949	12.9
Darʿā	1,538	2.3	290	3.0	139	5.2	288	3.1	26	2.0	220	3.0
As-Suwaydāʾ	2,326	3.6	305	3.1	119	4.4	185	2.0	41	3.1	358	4.9
Al-Qunayṭrah	2,703	4.1	116	1.2	80	3.0	252	2.7	22	1.7	177	2.4
Ḥimṣ	4,451	6.8	1,026	10.5	300	11.2	1,127	12.1	161	12.2	937	12.8
Ḥamāh	4,862	7.4	1,124	11.5	253	9.4	598	6.4	51	3.9	907	12.4
Ṭarṭūs	6,028	9.2	365	3.8	149	5.6	1,123	12.1	92	7.0	1,535	20.9
Latakia	5,514	8.4	235	2.4	164	6.1	952	10.3	75	5.7	252	3.4
Tishrīn University Latakia	394	0.6			182	6.8	281	3.0				
Idlib	3,538	5.4	1,006	10.3	143	5.3	382	4.1	45	3.4	958	13.1
Aleppo	3,985	6.1	1,718	17.7	215	8.0	897	9.7	256	19.5	356	4.9
Aleppo University	762	1.2			39	1.4	9	0.1				
Ar-Raqqah	2,673	4.1	509	5.2	89	3.3	384	4.1	39	3.0	106	1.4
Dayr-az-Zūr	749	1.1	314	3.2	91	3.4	343	3.7	33	2.5	123	1.7
Al-Ḥasakah	1,996	3.0	199	2.1	82	3.1	596	6.4	58	4.4	215	2.9
Security forces	12,834	19.6										
Total	65,580	100.0	9,732	100.0	2,684	100.0	9,292	100.0	1,314	100.0	7,334	100.0

Source: Baʿth Regional Command Headquarters.

Note: The category of "Others" amounted in 1989 to 37,974 members and included 153 artists, 364 pharmacists, 347 journalists and writers, and persons of "other" occupations.

[a]Include secondary vocational, technical, and training institute students.

[b]The regions of the cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Ḥimṣ, and Ḥamāh constitute Syria's major industrial centers.

[c]Include students of al-Baʿth University which was founded in the city of Ḥimṣ in 1979.

[d]Many of the artisans of the Damascus area live and work in rural districts due to the capital's high shop rents and cost of housing.

TABLE 13–5
Social Composition of the Baʿth Party, 1968, 1974, 1982, 1989, and 1992

Category	1968		1974		1982		1989		1992	
	% of Full Members	% of Supporting Members	No. of All Members	%	No. of All Members	%	No. of All Members	%	No. of All Members	%
Peasants	16	28	46,278	25.1	64,219	15.4	99,078	12.4	131,477	13.0
Secondary school students[a]							299,099[a]	37.5	367,424[a]	36.4
College and institutes' students	20	32	64,162	34.8	200,990	48.4	104,918	13.2	136,302	13.6
Schoolteachers	16	4	13,275	7.2	31,421	7.6	66,864	8.4	78,851	7.8
College professors							2,173	0.3	3,711	0.4
Production workers	12	14	19,544	10.6	53,780	12.9	91,457	11.5	181,299	18.0
"Administrative workers"	32	7	36,321	19.7	38,634	9.3	65,580	8.2	78,100	7.8
Artisans					3,780	0.9	9,732	1.2	10,564	1.0
Physicians, dentists, and veterinarians					616	0.1	2,684	0.3	4,395	0.4
Engineers and agronomists	4	15	4,793	2.6	2,474	0.6	9,292	1.2	13,246	1.3
Judges and lawyers					354	0.1	1,314	0.2	2,035	0.2
Others					19,362[b]	4.7	45,308[c]	5.6	839[d]	0.1
Total	100	100	184,373	100.0	415,630	100.0	797,499	100.0	1,008,243	100.0

Sources: The figures for 1982, 1989, and 1992 were obtained from the headquarters of the Baʿth Regional Command, Damascus, in December 1992. The sources for the 1968 and 1974 figures are, respectively the Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Min Taqārīri Muqarrarāt-il-Muʾtamar al-Quṭrī ar-Rābi*, p. 62, and *at-Tacqrīr ut-Tandhīmī*, 1975 p. 60.

[a]Includes secondary vocational, technical, and training institute students.

[b]Includes housewives, nurses, pharmacists, journalists, writers, and artists.

[c]Includes 7,334 housewives, 364 pharmacists, 347 journalists and writers, 153 artists and others.

[d]Include pharmacists, journalists, and writers.

TABLE 13–6
Social Composition of the Female Component of the Baʿth Party, 1982 and 1992

Category	1982		1992		
	Female Members	*% of All Members*	*Female Members*	*% of All Members*	*% of All Female Members*
Peasants	1,731	2.7	2,549	1.9	1.0
Secondary school students	51,573	25.7	126,854	34.5	50.9
College students			45,346	33.3	18.2
Schoolteachers			29,185	37.0	11.7
College professors	7,734	24.6	877	23.6	0.4
Production workers	2,517	4.7	31,316	17.3	12.6
"Administrative workers"	2,576	6.7	10,324	13.2	4.1
Artisans	138	3.6	291	2.7	0.1
Physicians, dentists, and veterinarians	23	3.7	576	13.1	0.2
Engineers and agronomists	106	4.3	1,422	10.7	0.6
Judge and lawyers	9	2.5	136	6.7	0.1
Others	2,908	15.0	191	22.8	0.1
Total	69,315	16.7	249,067	24.7	100.0

Source: Figures obtained from the headquarters of the Baʿth Regional Command, Damascus, in December 1992.

the Baʿthists at Aleppo University and, to a lesser extent, in the Aleppo party apparatus. Even so, the party succeeded in markedly expanding its base in both of Syria's principal cities. In this regard it would suffice, while keeping in view the statistics in the table under study, to bring to mind the candid admission of the Baʿthists of the 1960s that they had "a very feeble presence" in Damascus and Aleppo and Asad's own disclosure that in 1970 the Aleppo city party organization counted no more than seventy members.[13] But the party had fared better among the peasants in the Aleppo province, and in 1989 its Aleppo peasant component added up to 15.8 percent of the party's entire peasant membership (Table 13–4). However, this must be viewed in light of the fact that in that year Aleppo province accounted for at least 17 percent of Syria's adult peasant population and for as much as 22.1 percent of all of the country's cultivated lands.[14]

It is no less clear from Table 13–3 that the provinces of Ḥamāh, Latakia, Ḥimṣ, and Ṭarṭūs constitute, relatively speaking, important membership-feeding sources. The reasons are not far to seek, given the historically strong rural and minority character of the party.

For one thing, Ḥamāh was the home base of Syria's first agrarian movement, which Akram Ḥūrānī inspired and which found support among peasants of diverse religious confessions, particularly in the country areas of Ḥamāh, and Ḥimṣ.

For another thing, the provinces of Latakia and Ṭarṭūs are mainly inhabited

by ʿAlawīs, and Ḥamāh and Ḥimṣ have large numbers of ʿAlawī peasants, as in the plains of ʿAshārneh and al-Ghāb, or the region of Maṣyāf, or the villages attached to al-Mkharram al-Fūqānī administrative center, which lies to the northeast of Ḥimṣ. In the mid-1970s the Lebanese Druze leader Kamāl Junblāt contended that, through a silent and massive migration, the ʿAlawīs had become a majority in the city of Ḥimṣ, but they are probably nearer to a third of its population.[15] For their part, the Christians form perhaps 10 percent of the urban and no less than 20 percent of the rural inhabitants of Ḥimṣ province. In rural Ḥamāh they constitute one-tenth of the people. The Ismāʿīlīs have a local significance in Salamiyah, which lies in the steppes southeast of Ḥamāh, and in Maṣyāf, which is halfway between Ḥamāh and the coast. If, by underlining the salient presence of heterodox elements or confessional minorities in all four provinces, the strength of the Baʿthists among them is highlighted, it is necessary at the same time to bring into relief the authentic fraternization that has developed under the party between the younger and educated peasants of all the different religions and sects.

There is another reason for the large following of the Ḥamāh party organization: the party utilized the state-run irrigation and land reclamation schemes in the Ghāb valley on the Orontes to deepen its penetration among the peasants. It used the development projects on the Euphrates and the Khabūr rivers for the same purpose, which accounts to a considerable degree for its strong footholds amid the peasants in the provinces of al-Ḥasakah, ar-Raqqah, and Dayr-az-Zūr (see Table 13–4).

The party's relative weakness in al-Ḥasakah province as a whole is explicable by the large number, in its northeastern part, of more or less unassimilated non-Arabs—mostly Kurds and, to a lesser extent, Assyrians, Armenians, and Yazīdis—and, in its other parts, of semi-nomadic tribesmen, mainly Shammarites, although bedouinism is on the decrease everywhere in the Jazīrah by virtue of the break-up of the tribal organization and the state settlement policy.

The adequate footing of the party in the predominantly Sunnī provinces of Darʿā and Dayr az-Zūr and its marked presence in the solidly Druze province of as-Suwaydāʾ may reasonably be ascribed to the fact that the party had early struck roots in the Ḥawrān plain, the Druze Mountain, and the town of Dayr az-Zūr. It is true that many Druze Baʿthists had followed the lead of Manṣūr al-Aṭrash, who linked his fortunes to those of the party's old guard, and that numerous Baʿthists in the Dayr az-Zūr province had been partisans of Jalāl as-Sayyid, who fell away from the party in the mid-1950s, or of Dr. Yūsuf Zuʿayyin, a former prime minister and a close associate of the overpowered Ṣalāḥ Jadīd.[16] But after 1970, with the hard core of all the Baʿthist factions or subfactions overcome, their rank and file found themselves, by and large, under Asad's protective wings and, sooner or later, were in great numbers attracted back into the party.

The comparatively large proportion of the peasant membership in the Idlib party organization (see Table 13–4) is to some extent attributable to the winning over into the ranks of many of "Ahl-il-ʿŪd" or "the People of the Tree,"

who dwell in the uplands of the Idlib region and have long been known for their skill as husbandmen and their strong devotion to the soil. With its sprinkling of Druze, Shīʿī, and Christian villages but preponderance of Sunnī peasants, Idlib has also a high rural population density. No fewer than 79.9 percent of its inhabitants are country people. This exceeds the corresponding rate for any other Syrian province. By comparison, that of Damascus City and rural Damascus combined comes to only 27 percent, and that of Aleppo province 34.7 percent.[17]

At first sight the figures for party membership in the frontier province of al-Qunayṭrah given in Table 13–3 are rather striking and appear to suggest that its entire adult population is enrolled in the party, inasmuch as its inhabitants added up to only 26,258 in 1981[18] and 41,000 in 1992.[19] It is not unlikely that the Baʿthists made unusual efforts to widen their membership base in this province, owing to its special military importance. But the principal explanation may lie in the probability that party recruits from among the 150,000 or so people who had abandoned their homes or had been forced off their villages in the Golan Heights during or subsequent to the 1967 war are also reckoned as belonging to the Qunayṭrah party organization, even though they are now living in the Damascus region.[20]

It is clear from Tables 13–4 and 13–5 that the party is overloaded with students. In 1992 they constituted half of its entire membership. But it should be kept in mind that practically all the secondary school students and the overwhelming majority of the college students who are inscribed in party rolls are merely "supporting members." The significance that the regime attaches to the political assimilation of the students, however, may be gathered from the fact that they constitute one of the two elements of the population—the other being the members of the armed forces—among whom political activity is forbidden to the non-Baʿthist organizations incorporated in the Asad-sponsored National Progressive Front.

The party is also weighted heavily toward educators. In 1992 no fewer than 55 percent of all the country's schoolteachers belonged to the party.[21] The corresponding proportion for college professors is undoubtedly high but cannot be precisely determined. Educational institutions are likewise the prime sources that feed the female contingent of the party: in the same year no fewer than 69.1 percent of the female Baʿthists were students, and 12.1 percent were professors or schoolteachers (see Table 13–6). In concentrating so much of its recruitment effort on schools and colleges, the party in the Asad period has really been walking in the footsteps of the old Baʿthists.

Suggestive of the strength of the ʿAlawīs in Baʿthist ranks is the fact that Latakia province, which accounts for only 6 percent of Syria's population, had in the party in 1989 1.8 times as many secondary school students, 1.7 times as many schoolteachers, and nearly as many college professors and "administrative workers" (mainly public officials) as the city of Damascus, which forms 11.4 percent of the whole population (Tables 13–3 and 13–4). No less indicative of the strong position of the ʿAlawīs in the party is that Ṭarṭūs province,

with its mere 5 percent share of the country's inhabitants, had in the same year the highest proportion of Baʿthist housewives and government servants and was, along with Ḥimṣ, next to Damascus in the number of Baʿthist engineers and agronomists.

The Reasons Why the Proportion of Peasants in the Party Declined in the 1980s and Rose Subsequently

In the light of the salient role of the ʿAlawīs in the life of the party, the relatively low proportions of peasants in the Baʿth's Latakia and Ṭarṭūs organizations might come, on a first view, as a surprise. But it is not difficult to trace out the relevant causal factors. In the first place, in these provinces the ʿAlawīs had since 1963—and until the late 1980s—been divorcing themselves from the soil and slipping away to the cities and towns in increasing numbers to seek their fortunes in other occupations, particularly in the armed forces and even more in the politically relevant military units, such as the regime-shielding Special Forces, or the Presidential Guard, or the Third Armored Division and, prior to 1984, the Defense Companies. This movement has been less intense among the ʿAlawīs of the plains than among those from the mountains, whose areas have been always of marginal agricultural significance and who were noted, even in the nineteenth century, as much for their assiduity in effort and endurance of hardships as for their geographical mobility, concentrations of them being then found, in greater or smaller numbers, in the marshes of the Ghāb, the saline plain of al-Marj (east of the Ghūṭah), and as far as the Golan.[22] But after 1963 they came down from the mountains in swarms to work the land and benefit from the water schemes or acquire rights of exploitation in the plains of the Orontes and especially in the now-reclaimed Ghāb, whose population increased as a result several fold.[23] However, in the migration to this area and in its original settlement considerable non- ʿAlawī elements were also involved.

But the relatively inadequate foothold of the party among the peasants of the provinces of Latakia and Ṭarṭūs must at the same time be set in the context of the steady decline in the two decades prior to 1989 of the proportion of peasant members in the party as a whole. As Table 13–5 reveals, in 1974 the peasants accounted for 25.1 percent but in 1989 for only 12.4 percent of the entire membership. This in turn reflects the decrease of the proportion of Syrians engaged in agriculture from 53 percent to 22.9 percent of the economically active population between 1974 and 1989 (see Table 1–3), which is explicable by the rural exodus largely induced by such factors as the irregularity of rainfall, soil deterioration in some areas, greater dependence on agricultural machinery, the higher rewards of other occupations, and seasonal employment in Libya and the Gulf countries. But since 1989 there has been a "reverse migration" from the cities and towns to the villages,[24] which accounts for the rise of the proportion of agriculturists to 28 percent of the labor force in 1991 and the increase to 13 percent of the share of the party's peasant component in 1992.

If the intake of new peasant members over the last two decades was scarcely enough to keep pace with the growth of the party's total membership, there has been, on the other hand, a marked advance in the process of assimilating cultivators into the party: whereas in 1974 only 5.5 percent of Syria's peasants were Baʿthists, in 1992 16.6 percent or, to be more specific, as many as 25.6 percent of male peasants but as few as 0.9 percent of peasant women belonged to the party.[25]

In the early 1970s the party leadership had dwelt on the obstacles impeding recruitment efforts among the peasants. "By virtue of the nature of his work, the peasant," read one of its internal circulars,

> lives, in most instances, in small villages, that is, in narrowly circumscribed social surroundings. He knows and is known by all the local inhabitants. His conduct is in consequence more closely watched than in any other milieu. By reason of his few external contacts and bent, as he is, on preserving his standing in the community, he clings with zeal and fanaticism to the prevalent social notions by which he has been raised and which have shaped his personality and views of life.

The leadership did not hide the peasant's deeply rooted distrust of the state and made plain that his dealings with the government had been characterized by "a mixture of suspicion and resignation." It also warned activists against approaching the peasants with an "involved and unintelligible" political jargon, which "would only arouse in them boredom and disgust."[26]

But by the early 1990s things were no longer going on in their old grooves. "The Syrian village," affirmed elatedly the head of the Peasants' General Union in 1991, "has gone from one condition to its opposite. In whatever direction the eye now turns, it sees the constituent elements of modernity . . . : pure water, electricity, roads, schools, institutes, health centers, bridges, dams, and advanced means of communication, all pointing to the magnificence of the peasants' golden age."[27]

However, the new amenities of life have also been undermining or destroying some of the old virtues. "In former times," complained a rural agricultural supervisor,

> our village consisted of no more than thirty interconnected black stone houses huddled together amid ponds of mud. . . . Its peasant toiled summer and winter but at the end of the season could assure his yearly food supply only with great difficulty. All were none the less contented. . . . Cooperation was their method in life. If one of them was afflicted, everybody consoled him and when his heart was glad, the whole village shared in his happiness. Today the hamlet has grown fourfold. . . . Its dwellings are modern. . . . Water and artificial light have reached every house. . . . But the strange and painful thing is that the spirit of the villager has changed. The old union of hearts and practice of mutual help have given way to dealings based on self-interest and the pursuit of material benefits.[28]

It is difficult to say how representative or widespread this feeling is or to what extent the complainant is investing the past with romance. In any case, the

rise in the material well-being of many of the peasants, who had entered after 1958 upon the ownership of the land, the change in the social status of the peasantry as a whole, the greater application of mechanized methods to agriculture and the attendant wider dissemination of technical skills, and the long strides made in combating illiteracy and expanding educational facilities in the countryside—the illiteracy rate among the rural population aged ten and over dropped from at least (but, by reason of a likely undercount of female peasants, probably substantially higher than) 42.7 percent in 1960 to about 25.4 percent in 1991[29]—all these things attuned more and more peasants to new ideas and decreased their resistance to Baʿthist recruitment drives.

CHAPTER 14

Asad's Background, Early Education, Party Apprenticeship, and First Political Battle

THERE HAS been much interest in the personality and career of Asad. The most illuminating portrait of him is indubitably that drawn by the British writer Patrick Seale.[1] But we will probably never have an image of the entire Asad, for there is considerable truth in the observation made in 1985 by his long-time ally and defence minister, Muṣṭafa Ṭlās. "It is possible," he said, "to draw close to Ḥāfiz al-Asad in some degree but it is difficult to grasp fully all the various sides of his thought."[2] In the same year the late P.L.O. chief Abū Iyād put it differently. He called Asad a "bāṭinī" (esoteric), conveying that his tongue does not reveal what is in the recesses of his mind. "On the issue of concern to us, that of our people," Abū Iyād continued, "Asad is inscrutable. We do not know where he really stands."[3] Ilyās Sarkīs, the president of Lebanon from 1976 to 1982, could not get to the bottom of Asad's Lebanese policy. "As far as I am concerned," he confided to an advisor, " he remains an enigma."[4]

Asad's proneness to weave tangled webs around his real intentions, though developed by him to an art, is in truth a strain that he shares with many members of his ʿAlawī sect, and is ultimately explicable by their long experience as a repressed minority. In many a society, dissimulation has been a principal weapon of subordinate groups unjustly burdened or restrained. If they are also inferior numerically, a rapid rise in their political strength seldom brings a quick change in their behavior because of their acute uncertainty about the permanence of their new power.

From the perspective of this study, the most interesting point about Asad is that he is the first ruler in Syria's history who is of peasant extraction. On the very rare occasions when he bared his heart—as when his regime came under hurtful attacks by the Muslim Brethren or under stinging criticism by intellectuals for abuse of power—he was unreserved as to the class with which, in feeling, he identifies himself. In an address to his people on March 8, 1980 he asserted:"I am first and last—and of this I hope every Syrian citizen and every Arab outside of Syria will take cognizance—a peasant and the son of a peasant. To lie amidst the spikes of grain or on the threshing floor is, in my eyes, worth all the palaces in this world."[5]

In a subsequent speech to a congress of the Peasants' General Union he described the tenor of his early years on his father's farm. He recounted to his audience in some detail how he had shared their life. "I had," he pointed out, "a passion for threshing the harvest . . . but I took part in all the phases of farming . . . , lived your emotions and understand what your life signifies. I still

have mental pictures of the injustices of the time. . . . No matter how far the past sinks away, it is necessary to keep these images alive in our minds, not to nurse hatred against anyone but to see into them, for what we endured forms an essential part of the way we view things and of the foundation on which we build the present and the future."[6]

Although Asad came from a lineage of tillers of the soil, his family enjoyed some consideration in his native Qirdāḥah. The local inhabitants called his father a mutasharriʿ, that is, one who had a sufficient grasp of the Sharīʿah (the revealed law of Islam) and the laws of the country to express an opinion that would spare disputants from having recourse to the government and its courts.[7] According to an old educator who taught school in the village from 1956 to 1961,[8] the Asads wielded influence in Qirdāḥah's quarter of al-ʿĀylah and left a permanent mark on the local Christians whom they had guarded from injury or danger. Snuggled on the slopes of a hill thirty kilometers or so southeast of the port of Latakia, Qirdāḥah, which served as a sort of market for neighboring villages, numbered about 1,800 souls in 1930,[9] the year of Asad's birth, and 3, 357 in 1970,[10] when he achieved supreme power. The quarter of al-ʿĀylah comprised barely one-fourth of the population and was inhabited largely by a clan from the Kalbiyyah tribe.[11] The chiefship of the clan was drawn from the Asad family but dominance in the village as a whole belonged until the agrarian reform of 1958 to the families of Isbir and Ismāʿīl, who led two other Kalbiyyah clans—those of Jarkas[12] and Ḥassūn. The village's influential religious shaykhs, including the imāms of Qirdāḥah's mosque, were provided by another family, al-Khayyir, which stemmed from the tribe of al-Khayyaṭīn.[13]

Beside the heads of these families, Asad's father, ʿAlī Sulaymān, who had been born in 1875, cut a relatively humble figure. In the prime of his youth he had been a lowly peasant but, by extreme economy and good husbandry, he made additions to the small plot of land that he had inherited. Even so, he never lived in really easy circumstances. On one occasion, in the presence of eighteen men of learning, Asad, as president, recounted how he had at one point to leave school temporarily until his father could scrape together the sixteen Syrian pounds needed for his tuition. "But," he added, "we were not commoners. On the contrary my father was a half Agha."[14] This remark, if somewhat awkward, accurately portrays the standing of ʿAlī Sulaymān in the middle and later stages of his life, and finds support in a formal declaration expressing disapproval of French policies in Syria, written on July 2, 1936, and preserved in the archives of the Quai d'Orsay. In the French rendering of the declaration of which he was one of the signatories, he is identified as an " ʿAlawī chief and former member of the [appointed] ʿAlawī constituent assembly."[15]

This document belies the story circulated in the 1980s by the opponents of Asad, who claimed that his father had in 1936 backed a petition forwarded to Paris by the president of the Representative Council of the Latakia Government rejecting the "reattachment, in any form whatever," of the ʿAlawī people to the Syrian republic and calling for the preservation of their "independence" under "the aegis of France." The signature of Asad's father was not on this petition[16]

but on the aforesaid declaration of July 2, 1936, which decried "the unfortunate policy of division that the representatives of France at Latakia continue to pursue to this very day" and asserted that "the ʿAlawīs are Muslims," that "religions cannot provide the basis for the constitution of peoples," and that "our territory . . . has always formed an integral part of Syria."[17]

There is a story about Asad's father that may be of some interest if only because of the possible effect of the narrated event upon the personality of Asad. It is, however, difficult to say whether the story is true or baseless. It purports to account for the death in 1938 of Bayāt, Asad's oldest full brother, at the age of eighteen. It suggests that at home ʿAlī Sulaymān was an autocrat and that early poverty had hardened his heart. One day in that year—the story goes—on discovering that Bayāt had squandered part of the money he gave him to defray the cost of grinding corn at a mill in Jableh, he flew into a rage and, seizing an "iron" halter, struck him with it repeatedly and without mercy until his skin broke and he lost blood. Confined next in a barn, Bayāt, according to the same account, fell into a mental anguish so deep that he took his own life that very night. Ḥāfiz al-Asad, who was then only eight years old, is said to have told a friend sometime after his graduation from the military academy: "since the day I saw my brother suspended by the neck in the barn, no tear has fallen from my eye."[18]

That Asad's father had a violent disposition is suggested by another incident that is recounted by an Alawite friend of Rifʿat al-Asad, who maintains that on learning one day that "his brother ʿAzīz had turned Christian, having been duped, beguiled, and caught in the snare of the missionaries," ʿAlī Sulaymān "went into a fit of rage, . . . seizing his brother by the collar and lashing the floor with him. He then tied him up with a firm rope and vowed not to release him until he broke off from Christianity." In the end ʿAzīz "deferred to his brother's will . . . and returned to his senses."[19]

Asad learned his letters at the hands of a humble village cleric, Shaykh Kāmel Ḥāmid. He took the lessons in the latter's mud and stone house in the winter and under neighboring trees in the summer. He reportedly committed to memory one-fourth of the Qurʾān and by the age of seven completed the course. Subsequently he enjoyed advantages that were as yet beyond the reach of most peasant children: he received formal primary instruction, in large part at a newly founded school in Qirdāḥah, and in 1944 was packed off to Latakia for his secondary training. As is clear from his surviving school record, he was fascinated above all by history and had a natural aversion for athletic exercises: his score in history was 19 out of 20 in 1944–1945 and 95 out of 100 in 1945–1946, and in gymnastics 6 and 54, respectively. However, in overall performance he outshone all his schoolmates in both years.[20] It is interesting that in 1983 lack of physical exercise would be one of the factors contributing to his heart ailment.

Although his first education under Shaykh Ḥāmid was very much dominated by ʿAlawī religious norms, young Asad showed little interest at Latakia in sectarian causes. A party of distinct ʿAlawī coloring, Iṣlāḥ-ur-Rīf-il-ʿAlawī—The

Reform of the ʿAlawī Countryside—was then active in that city, but it evoked no response from him whatever.

It is possible to explain his gravitation toward the Baʿthists in 1947 partly in terms of the fact that fellow ʿAlawīs from Alexandretta, who had lost their homes in the wake of the annexation of their district by the Turks in 1939, formed the backbone of the Baʿth movement in Latakia. At any rate, it was in large measure thanks to their efforts, and above all to the initiative of one of their leaders, Dr. Wahīb al-Ghānem, a high-minded physician, that Asad's school became a breeding ground of Baʿthism.

Born in 1919 to a religious shaykh and director of an elementary ʿAlawī school in the ʿAffān quarter of Antioch, Ghānem espoused in his youth the cause of Zakī al-Arsūzī, who guided the Arab agitation against the Turks in Alexandretta between 1936 and 1938, and, like Arsūzī, eventually sought refuge in Damascus.[21] In the summer of 1940, while still a student at the medical school, he traveled through the Latakia countryside and saw at first hand something of the dire poverty of the cultivating plains people and the peasant mountaineers. On receiving his degree in 1943, he decided to set up his clinic in the capital town of the province, and in the succeeding years regularly betook himself into the interior, often moving on foot from village to village and administering treatment and medicine to indigent peasants free of charge. This, as could be expected, gained him such a name and reputation among rural people that before long he was revered in many a hamlet as a "saintlike" figure. He also won the feelings of not a few of the pupils at Asad's school, and in particular those from modest peasant homes, who increasingly looked upon him as an example and an inspiration.

Similarly influenced, Asad attached himself to Wahīb al-Ghānem, accepting him as a mentor and guide and embracing his version of Baʿthism, that is, a Baʿthism oriented first and foremost toward the peasants. In brief, at this stage of Asad's life, Ghānem played a formative role in his ideological and political development. It would also appear that at one point Ghānem, who was ever ready to help others, bore part of the expense of Asad's education according to one of Ghānem's friends—but merely "tutored him free of charge," according to Ghānem himself.[22]

Syria's future president gave early evidence of his fitness for leadership. According to an account penned by a teacher at his secondary school, Asad was in 1950 "the first rural student" to be "entrusted" with the chairmanship of the Latakia Student Committee, and later "won the confidence of his student comrades" in Syria's other cities thanks largely to his role in linking together their various committees on a national basis and unifying their political struggle. His prominence as a student leader may in part be ascribed to his personal qualities—his affable manners, mental calm, and marked capacity as an organizer—but is also attributable to his affiliation with the Baʿth: the members of the nation-ranging Students' Union, who chose him to preside over their activities in 1951, had collectively adhered to the party.[23]

Asad's first political battle was against what was locally known as "the Ré-

gie" or, to call its by its proper name, La Compagnie Libano-Syrienne des Tabacs, a largely French-owned concern that in 1935, after a five-years' interval of free cultivation, was granted, in a somewhat modified form, the monopoly over tobacco production in Syria that the old Régie Co-interessée des Tabacs had exercised from 1883 to 1930.

During Asad's school years the atmosphere in Latakia province was saturated with hatred against the company. In the eyes of the peasants who grew tobacco on the mountain slopes, the shadow of the Régie lay like a curse upon the land. It controled much of the most fertile parts of the region and had a grip on the life of a great number of cultivators. It determined the extent of the areas to be devoted to the crop; gave licenses to some growers and denied them to others, turning licenses into a tradable commodity; and through its agents assessed the harvest and fixed the amount and the price of the produce to be delivered to its warehouses. It also had its own men in parliament and the administration. The peasant enjoyed, in theory, the right to appeal its assessments but in practice seldom dared to question them. From his point of view, the return he received from the company was scarcely commensurate with the labor he expended. Tobacco is a delicate plant and requires much care. The field for it has to be thoroughly prepared, and when the plant is young it has to be regularly watered. It needs protection against insects and from sudden changes of weather. It has also to be topped, primed, harvested, and cured. An estimate for 1950 put the money worth of the average annual per capita agricultural income in the Latakia province at 50 Syrian pounds (or 1.5 Turkish gold līras), and that for tobacco growing at only 20 Syrian pounds.[24]

The long-seething hatred for the Rôgie broke into the open in that year, triggered by a campaign initiated by the Latakia Baʿth party branch, which kept the agitation consistently on course. Through their strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of pressure on the government, not only in Latakia but also in Aleppo and Damascus, Asad and his "student comrades" played a significant role in bringing the campaign to a successful issue: in 1951 the Régie was nationalized.

CHAPTER 15

Asad's Military Career and Military Qualifications, or the Inferences as to His Generalship Deducible from His Performance in the 1967 and 1973 Wars and during Israel's Invasion of Lebanon

In September of 1951 Asad entered—as had many sons of propertied peasants in straitened circumstances before him—the cost-free military academy at Ḥimṣ, although he had no particular inclination for the life of a man of arms. After acquiring the fundamentals of his profession and undergoing training as a flyer, he was appointed in 1955 to the rank of lieutenant in the air force. His subsequent military career bears significance mainly because it served as a springboard for his attainment of power. The military coup of 1949 had opened the age of military politicians in Syria. From that point onward, mastery over the armed forces became increasingly the principal—and after 1961 the only—means by which mastery over the state could be secured. Asad himself has clearly been more adept at political than military warfare, and historically occupies a higher place in statecraft than among military commanders.

Indeed from 1960, when he adhered to the clandestine Military Committee—whose activities have been described in Chapter 12[1]—to 1966, when he became Syria's minister of defense, he had far more experience in political intrigue than in military service. He had been only a captain in 1960 and between December 1961 and March 1963 was on the retired list, but on the day of the 1963 coup he was swiftly elevated to lieutenant colonel and in 1964 to major general.[1] When the Six Day War of 1967 broke out, he was still a military amateur and did not have the qualifications to be the thinking head of the armed forces.

In judging his performance at this juncture, of course, it is necessary to take into account the resources and means with which he had to work and the attendant objective situation, which was in essence disadvantageous to Syria. The military scales were heavily weighted in favor of Israel. It enjoyed not only control in the air but a wide margin of technological and qualitative superiority on the ground. More than that, no general could have gotten any good out of an officer corps that, by repeated political purges—for which Asad was partly responsible—had been denuded of many of its experienced members (see Chapter 12).

After allowing for all the extenuating circumstances, however, it is difficult to gloss over one instance of glaring incompetence or misjudgment for which Asad must take at least some of the blame, and which came strongly to public notice and had ruinous military results.[2] I am referring to the Communiqué No.

66 of ill fame issued by Asad, as minister of defense, and broadcast over Damascus Radio at 09:30 (08:30 Israeli time) on June 10, 1967, at a moment of deadly danger in the course of the war. "The Israeli forces," the communiqué affirmed, "captured the town of Qunayṭrah after a fierce battle that had been raging since early morning in unequal circumstances, the enemy having covered the sky above the battle with capabilities available only to a superpower."[3]

But "at that hour," in the words of Moshe Dayan, then Israel's minister of defense, "no Israeli soldier was in sight of the city."[4] In fact, orders had earlier been given by the Israeli chief of staff Yitzhak Rabin to the commander of the front "to forego the occupation of Qunayṭrah and stabilize [the Israeli] line" at the positions gained on the ninth, the first day of the invasion of the Golan Heights. The Syrian troops had defended themselves furiously. "The battle," according to Rabin, "was tough and stubborn, taking a heavy toll of casualties." The Syrian fortifications proved "impregnable to shelling" and were "the scenes of bitter hand-to-hand fighting." Despite evidence, at nightfall, of the beginning, of a Syrian retreat, Rabin gave orders to break off the offensive, prompted by the near exhaustion of the assailants and by Dayan's decision to cease hostilities at 08:00 hours.[5]

But the broadcast of Communiqué No. 66 altered the course of events. It had the immediate effect of undercutting the Syrian army by throwing it off balance psychologically and physically, and spreading confusion and panic in its ranks. As it floundered its way toward Damascus, the Israelis could not resist the temptation of pushing forward again but, under the constraining influence of the superpowers, confined themselves to the conquest of the Golan plateau.

What was behind the broadcast of Communiqué No. 66? Did it entail an effort, as Dayan maintained, "to spur the Security Council to adopt a cease-fire resolution" or, more accurately, to enforce the cease-fire resolution the Council had already adopted?[6] Or did it involve an attempt, as Rabin conjectured, "to leave the impression that Damascus was menaced and thus pressure the Soviet Union into intervening, if we did not bring our advance to a halt?"[7]

In answer to a question on this subject, Dr. Ibrahīm Mākhūs, who in 1967 was Syria's minister for foreign affairs and the most influential civilian associate of Syria's strongman Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, gave in 1986 the following version of the underlying circumstances. "On the morning of June 10," he said,

> an army officer with the rank of colonel or brigadier general arrived from the front at Army headquarters and reported to Ḥāfiz al-Asad that he saw a column of tanks, which he assumed to be Israeli, near Khān al-Uraynibah, a town situated five kilometers or so to the northeast of Qunayṭrah on the road to Damascus and regarded as the gate to the front. From this the inference was drawn that the town of Qunayṭrah itself must have fallen. The real error here lay in not verifying the accuracy of the officer's report by every possible means before making the Communiqué public. The Army Command, headed by Ḥāfiz al-Asad, had the authority to broadcast military Communiqués without referring to the political leadership, which was not consulted prior to the Damascus Radio announcement."[8]

It is difficult to reconcile this version of the events with the account given in 1969 by Sāmī aj-Jundī, who during the 1967 war served as Syria's ambassador to Paris. "I was surprised," he wrote, "to see on the television [on June 10] Syria's representative at the U.N. announcing . . . and Israel's representative denying the fall of Qunayṭrah and the arrival of the Israeli forces at the heights commanding Damascus. Dr. Mākhūs told me afterward that it was a skillful plan to 'alarm' the world so that Damascus would be saved."[9]

Whatever the truth may be, Asad does not emerge from either variant of the events in the best of lights. If Communiqué No. 66 was the result of an unintentional military error, one cannot help feeling that a defense minister more experienced than Asad would have not only ascertained the correctness of the alleged report but also considered and provided for every likely effect of the Communiqué on the army before making it public, instead of unwittingly enhancing, as actually happened, Israel's chances of commanding victory. If, on the other hand, Communiqué No. 66 was the product of a premeditated political "plan"—and no such a "plan" could have been made without the participation of Asad, Jadīd's principal partner in 1967—one cannot but think poorly of the judgment of the decision makers involved, not only because they made a muddle of things but also because it should have been obvious to properly qualified leaders from the dour fight the Syrian army put up on June 9 that, as Colonel Trevor N. Dupuy pointed out, "a serious Syrian resistance effort [in the Golan] would have greatly impeded the Israeli advance."[10]

But it is possible that Asad and Jadīd chose—as was suspected at the time—to sacrifice Syrian territory and the interests of the army in order to preserve their regime. What lent force to such a suspicion were persistent rumors that the striking and politically relevant units of the army—namely, such units as the seventieth Armored Brigade commanded by Colonel 'Izzat Jadīd and the tank regiment led by Captain Rif'at al-Asad—were the first to be extricated from the front under cover of night.[11]

It may be argued that, at least as far as Asad is concerned, the suspicion is undermined by the great risks to which, it would appear, he exposed his regime when he boldly engaged in the war of 1973; by way of counterargument, it might be contended that the risks were not as high as imaginable because the Soviet Union had a greater stake in the outcome of this conflict than in that of 1967.

We must admit that part of our criticism of Asad's performance in the Six Day War is little better than wisdom after the event and that we cannot as yet, if ever, rescue reality entirely from fiction, if only because Syrian decision making in 1967 was done in utmost secrecy or in an impromptu fashion, leaving behind no records and no evidence.

Asad learned more from Syria's defeat than the Israeli generals from their victory. His conduct of the 1973 war, which marked another milestone in his military career, suggests that his mind had expanded to the scale of the military problems that he faced. He had clearly helped his armed forces back to health, enhancing their discipline and their capacity for endurance, and greatly improv-

ing their weapons and fire power. Their military performance was based on sounder calculations and a more rational coordination of ends and means than in 1967. Asad had also developed a better sense of the Israelis and their psychology, and used time and space more skillfully achieving, in conjunction with the Egyptians, strategic surprise, a master key in war.[12]

Moreover, by furnishing the Israelis with a number of tactical surprises, he unbalanced them in the first phase of the conflict. For one thing, he directed the principal thrust of his liberating assault in the southern sector, when the Israelis had hypothesized that it would come in the northern sector of the Golan. For another thing, when counterattacking Israelis, resorting to tactics used in 1967, tried to rush through Syrian (and Egyptian) positions with tanks, unsupported by infantry or artillery, they "found themselves," in Dayan's words, "surrounded by enemy infantry equipped with large quantities of versatile anti-tank weapons," including RPG–7 bazookas and Sagger missiles.[13] Over and above this, the Israeli air force could not now perform as effectively or suffer casualties as light as in 1967 because the Syrian forces were thickly equipped with SAM–3 missile batteries, mobile SAM–6s, and antiaircraft artillery. Clearly, many men—among others, technical experts, members of the General Staff, field commanders, and Soviet military advisers—worked together to bring about these military improvements, but Asad bore ultimate responsibility for the whole endeavor.

There were also shortcomings in the 1973 war. Enjoined not to retreat at any cost except upon orders from the higher levels of the army command, Asad's forces did not show in their assaults the necessary flexibility. When, in the initial phase of the war, they ran into tough Israeli resistance, they did not, according to Colonel Dupuy "withdraw even a few hundred meters for maneuvering purposes" but "simply regrouped and survivors then smashed forward again." From this "inflexible Syrian demonstration of courage" the Israelis drew considerable advantage. The chance killing of a brave officer, Brigadier General ʿUmar Abrash, commander of the seventh Division, at a critical moment of the Golan fighting, also helped the Israelis.[14] Their massive resupply by the Americans with high-technology weapons, including Sidewinder missiles, had undoubtedly much weight in eventually assuring them the upper hand militarily or, at least in preventing an Arab victory, as U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had envisaged.[15]

But a more immediate factor in reversing the fortunes of the conflict on the Syrian front related to the risks inherent in any war waged by an alliance: the divergence in the aims and interests of the Egyptian and Syrian leaders played into the hands of the Israelis. The Egyptians crossed the Suez Canal and paused. After driving back a counterassault, they merely hung on, thereby enabling Israel "to concentrate on blocking the Syrian attack."[16] For a whole week Asad's forces bore alone the full weight of their enemy's air superiority. Israeli planes did not merely debilitate Syria's SAM umbrella over the front and disrupt its army's logistical system but, by carrying the war far into its heart, caused heavy damage to its economic installations. When the Egyptians eventu-

ally rejoined battle, they were too late and ineffectual. Although the Syrians were forced out of the parts of the Golan they had initially recovered, and lost more territory on the road to Damascus, their spirit was not broken. For them the 1973 war was a triumph of a sort, at least on the psychological plane. As Asad put it, "we did not free the land but we freed that which is more basic and needed to be freed first. We freed our will from every fetter. . . . We freed ourselves from fear, hesitation, . . . and the complexes of guilt and inadequacy [that had haunted us] . . . since the creation of Israel."[17]

Although the war did not have a fortunate end, Asad by consequence made headway politically among his own people. It magnified him in their eyes that he should have evinced the daring necessary to challenge Israel. His officers and associates had also observed and admired how during the most difficult phases of the conflict he remained unruffled and throughout showed balance, tempering vigor with restraint and undertaking nothing beyond his means.

On the regional level, however, there was a falling off in Asad's position after the war, despite his recovery of a slice of the Golan. By acting unilaterally and concluding in 1979 a separate peace with Israel, the Egyptian leadership in effect removed its country's potential from the Arab-Israeli military equation, seriously altering the regional distribution of power to Israel's advantage.

In this light must be viewed the high degree of caution and self-restraint that Asad exercised at the next critical point in his career as commander-in-chief, that is, in 1982, when the Israelis invaded Lebanon. It was on a cool calculation of the interests of his army that he sedulously refused to be drawn into an all-out encounter with them. With their mastery of the air, and the odds being in other respects so heavily in their favor, the likelihood of such a confrontation being attended with success for Syria was remote, if not nonexistent. Asad thus pretty much abandoned the Palestinians to their fate in southern Lebanon and did very little for them during the battle of Beirut. On the whole, and particularly after the infliction of heavy losses on his air force and the wiping out of his missile system in the Biqāʿ, he merely allowed delaying or holding actions. Threats to vital Syrian objectives such as the Beirut-Damascus highway, however, provoked fierce resistance not only by the regular army but also by special commando units.

In a sense Asad was fortunate in having Ariel Sharon as adversary. While Asad chose to fight in Lebanon with the weapon of intelligence, prevailing ultimately through the dexterity with which he had availed himself of the errors of his enemies, his deeper understanding of the local forces and greater skill in manipulating them, and his reliance on subterfuge, Lebanese guerrillas, and irregular tactics rather than on straightforward blows, Sharon's methods were those of a bull gone wild. By indiscriminate massive bombing of refugee camps and other thickly populated areas in south Lebanon and west Beirut, Sharon caused reckless destruction, appallingly high civilian casualties, and the displacement of upwards of half a million people. His decision to send the Phalangists into the refugee camps at Ṣabra and Shatīla, despite his knowledge of their

thirst for revenge and their prior record of wantonly inhumane deeds, excited horror even among Israelis.

For all that, on other than the short view of things, Sharon achieved none of his major objectives. He did not crush the Palestinian resistance. He did not force Syria out of the Biqāʿ. He failed to establish a client state in Lebanon. In due course, the Israelis had to extricate themselves from the muddle of their own making and to give up most of their territorial gains. By the winter of 1983–1984 Asad had snatched political victory from military defeat. After frustrating an American attempt to isolate him, derailing an unequal American-sponsored Israeli-Lebanese peace accord, and outwitting or outmaneuvering all opponents, Asad, now reequipped with more sophisticated Soviet air defense and missile systems, emerged from the whole ordeal with a decisive voice in the affairs of Lebanon and a palpably enhanced regional prestige.[18]

But this time great numbers of Syrians were in too sullen a mood to extol Asad. They could not help comparing the largely elusive and indirect character of his response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon with the terrible vengeance that he visited on the people of Ḥamāh for the armed uprising set off by the Muslim Brethren in February 1982. He had then gone to the length of leveling whole sections of the northern and eastern parts of the city, killing in the process, according to Western diplomats, at least 5,000 (or, as later revised, 10,000 people)[19] but, according to the veteran Syrian leader Akram Ḥūrānī, a native of Ḥamāh, no fewer than 25,000, even though, on the government's own reckoning, the armed members of the Muslim Brotherhood did not exceed 500. Women and children as well as Ḥamawīs of all political colorings, including Baʿthists, were among the victims of the "savage slaughter," much of which occurred after the suppression of the uprising.[20] The state of feeling among Asad's opponents was such that they cast in his teeth the early Islamic satirical but not altogether apposite verse, playing on his name: *Asad ʿalayya wa fī-l-ḥurūbī naʿāmah* . . . (Against me a lion and in the wars an ostrich . . .). In the Arabia of old the practice attributed to the ostrich was that of avoiding danger by refusing to face it.

CHAPTER 16

The Varied Aspects of Power in Asad's State

A Few Preliminary General Observations on "Democratic" Rhetoric and the Realities of Life

Ḥāfiz al-Asad and American politicians have one thing in common: their "democratic" rhetorical flourishes. In their public pronouncements they romanticize the power of the people, but in their actions the citizens at large seldom constitute a crucial driving force, except in moments of crisis or in times of unrest or rising popular consciousness.

By this remark it is not the intention to assimilate Syrian to American political realities. They are, it is obvious, different in important respects. In the U.S. polity there are such features as plural or divided power, institutionalized checks and balances, and relatively open, if increasingly money-driven, political competition. As a rule personal freedoms also enjoy legal protection and, in the domestic field, physical power is less likely to be crudely displayed or arbitrarily exercised.

But all these things do not add up to an authentic "democracy" which in essence means, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, "the government *of* the people, *by* the people, *for* the people," and, as thus defined, may be beyond realization. However, any serious progress toward it must involve, at the very least, a government based on a politically meaningful popular consent, which can only materialize and remain effectual if it is underpinned by equality not merely in the political rights but also, as far as is practicable, in the social conditions of the citizenry. Moreover, as is taken for granted, such a consent subsumes the institutionalized and periodically renewed consent of, at least, the majority of the governed. Ideally, it must also be an active, conscious, informed and unmanufactured consent. In other words, the governed must have a reasonably good understanding of their real interests and the actual workings of the political processes in which they are involved, and must be politically mature enough not to allow themselves to be manipulated for ends other than their own. This condition is, needless to say, extremely difficult to realize, the more so when the elements in society that, formally or informally, directly or indirectly, control the lawmaking process are not, as is often the case, linked together visibly but in a loose and very intricate manner, and when the citizens are not, broadly speaking, on a par with one another in regard to material resources, educational opportunities, and intellectual skills.

Therefore, while keeping in mind that the formal political enfranchisement of the people is a relatively recent development in the history of the world's most advanced societies, it is not inappropriate to question how meaningful is the

role of the majority of the people in the determination of public affairs in a country like the United States in the context of a political landscape occupied by huge corporations, massive state and military power complexes, and big units for the molding and manipulation of opinion. Or, to put it differently: is it possible at all to have a genuine political democracy in the absence of economic democracy, that is, under conditions in which the economic resources are very unevenly distributed and economic and financial power is heavily concentrated? The reverse question also bears upon the matter at hand: is it possible to have an authentic socialist order, that is, an economic democracy, when political power is undemocratically organized?

I have felt it justifiable to refer to all the foregoing considerations partly because, in my opinion, the question of power and consent in Syria cannot be properly understood in isolation from the larger historical or global picture, but also partly in view of all the huffing and puffing about "democracy" in a United States in which the majority of the people, though enjoying civil liberty, are in essence as politically marginalized as in the Arab countries.

Asad's Public and Private Views of the Power of Men in the Mass and Their Aptitude for Politics

In public Asad exalts and magnifies the people. "There are two powers that cannot be vanquished," he affirmed early on in his regime, "the power of God and the power of the people! . . . After this day no hand will rise above the hand of the people!"[1] On another occasion—in 1973—he referred to the people as "the source of every authority." "One element," he went on, "must invariably inhere in all [the political and syndicalist] institutions: the free choice and the free desire of the masses of the people."[2] To the principle of individual liberty he gave a conditional homage. His regime, he said in 1980, had from the outset attached due value to "the freedom of the citizen" and its "fulfillment in its widest forms," but warned that this was not tantamount to "every individual acting as he pleases and in a manner prejudicial to the people as a whole." Unless exercised "within the limits and rules" laid down by the entire community, freedom, he added could well "turn into anarchy."[3] He said much the same thing in the 1990s[4] but now used a new watchword, that of *at-taʿaddūdiyyah-s-siyāsiyyah* or "political pluralism," which, he argued, "we have been practicing for more than twenty years in the various areas of our life"[5]—an obvious reference to the circumscribed role that independent elements and non-Baʿthists parties, such as the Nāsirites, the Communists, and the Arab Socialists, have been allowed to play since 1972 in the government, the People's Assembly, and the system of local administrative councils.

More revealing is what he imparted in private in 1971 to the one-time secretary general of the Baʿth party and Syria's ambassador to the U.N., Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī.[6] He told him that the people have "primarily economic demands," that they aspire to acquire such things as a plot of land, a house, a car, or the like,

and that these demands he can satisfy "in one way or another." Only "one or two hundred individuals at most," he added, seriously engage in or make politics their profession and will oppose him no matter what he does. "It is for them," he concluded "that the Mezzeh prison was originally intended."[7]

In other words, in Asad's view, the common people are essentially economic beings and not made for politics. It is interesting how the thinking in this regard of a leader of peasant origin like Asad runs *in some degree* parallel to that of a renowned eighteenth-century ruler of "royal" blood. "I regard [men at large]," Frederick the Great wrote to Voltaire, "as a herd of stags in the park of a grand nobleman, with no other function than to breed and fill up the park."[8] But the element of contempt for men in the mass is more implicit in Asad and more narrowly related to their aptitude for politics or want of political consciousness.

The Four Levels of Asad's Power Structure and Their Basic Characteristics

In Asad's power pyramid four levels are discernible. On the first level, which is primary and relates to the general direction of policy or to questions crucial to his regime—such as security, intelligence, military or foreign affairs—all the critical threads are concentrated in his hands. In other words, on this uppermost level he possesses sole and undisputed authority.

Immediately below him are the unpublicized chiefs of the multiple intelligence and security networks, which function independently of one another, enjoy a broad latitude, and keep a close watch on everything in the country that is of concern to his regime. They form in effect the eyes and ears of Asad. As may be imagined, what goes on inside these networks is most secret and very carefully guarded.

On the same second level, and also directly answerable to Asad, are the commanders of the politically relevant, regime-shielding, coup-deterring, elite armed formations, such as the Republican Guard, the Special Forces, the Third Armored Division, and, before 1984, the Defense Companies. It is these formations, which alone are allowed into the capital, that constitute the essential underpinning of his power and not the regular armed forces, which since 1970 he had been increasingly at pains to depoliticize. By pluralizing the elite units and the intelligence and security networks, and balancing them against one another, he ensures that no single unit or network will become a menace to him or arrogate to itself more power than is compatible with the safety of his government.

Further below, on the third level, stands the Baʿth party command. Except, of course, for Asad, who is its secretary general, its members scarcely compare in importance to the intelligence chiefs or commanders of the elite forces, as became glaringly evident during the succession crisis of 1983–1984, when its role or that of the party as a whole was of little significance. In essence it serves as a consultative body for Asad and at the same time watches, through the party

machine, over the proper implementation of his policies by the elements on the fourth level, namely, the ministers, the higher bureaucrats, the provincial governors, the members of the executive boards of the local councils, and the leaders of the party's ancillary mass organizations and their subordinate organs.

Here again Asad is disposed within limits to pluralize influence and disperse it over a number of mutually balanced bodies, such as the Council of Ministers and the People's Assembly, or the provincial governors and the boards of local councils, or the bureaucrats of the Ministry of Agriculture or of Labor and the Peasants' or Workers' General Union. On this fourth level, a degree of open deliberation is allowed. The various sides to a complex issue are heard and different or opposite claims are weighed. Subdued criticism of the way certain policies are being implemented is also tolerated. This does not conflict with Asad's interests, but helps him to formulate more workable or more meaningful policies and to exercise his power in a smoother and more intelligent manner. By an appropriate balance between the different institutions he keeps them all in line. He himself remains above criticism, of course, and his preeminent position is beyond question. The side to which he lends his weight prevails.

Before examining more closely each of the four levels of Asad's power pyramid, it is necessary to call attention to—and scrutinize—forms of power in Syria that are less overt and more tortuous but no less effectual.

CHAPTER 17

Focusing for a While on the More Subtle Forms of Power

CONFINING ATTENTION exclusively to the leadership at the very top of society or to the heads of the key institutions of the state would keep indirect but effective forms of power in Syria out of view.

As a rule, it is not easy to gain access to evidence for the ability of groups or individuals outside the formal power loop to influence, by roundabout or clandestine means, or through personal connections or informal relationships, public policies or the course of events in manners answering to their purposes. But one illuminating example comes readily to mind. During Asad's "time of troubles," that is, in the period 1976–1982, a belief was current in Damascus that the merchants of Sūq al-Ḥamīdiyyah—one of the city's principal markets—were playing a double game. At least some of them were thought to be liberally subsidizing the Muslim Brethren while avoiding any public identification with the movement. Others, by gestures of support to the government through the Damascus Chamber of Commerce, secured concessions for the class as a whole. Thus in 1976, when the Muslim Brotherhood launched out against Asad's rule, and again in 1980, when its activities were approaching their peak, Asad eased matters for the merchants by sharply increasing their import quotas for consumer goods. The value of their registered imports rose from 1.72 billion Syrian pounds in 1975 to 3.63 billion pounds in 1976 and 4.17 billion pounds in 1980.[1] Asad also took pains in 1980 publicly to "thank and salute the Chamber of Commerce and merchants of Damascus for their patriotic feelings . . . and their devotion to the national interest."[2]

All this suggests, if anything, that when it comes to shrewdness, the mercantile class measures up to Asad. It is necessary to add that its capacity for making the most of his ingratiating policy was enhanced by the flow of money into front-line Syria in the 1970s from the Arab oil-producing Gulf states, and by the remittances of Syrians working abroad and the generally upward trend of agricultural production.[3]

It is interesting that the president's younger brother Rifʿat strongly suspected in the heyday of his power that "the merchants and owners of businesses" had been a driving force behind the dissensions within the Baʿth leadership since 1963. "They harbor feelings of ill-will toward the party," he confided to a friend who served under him in the Defense Companies. "We are not unaware," he went on, "of the rumors circulating at the popular level about the large role they have played, overtly and secretly, at home and abroad, in sowing discord among the members of the Baʿth command since the onset of the revolution,

and there is probably truth in what is said about their readiness to recoil from no intrigue calculated to divide our forces and break us up."[4]

Rifʿat also blamed the merchants for the widespread talk about his financial wheelings and dealings. He had asked the same friend: "What do you hear? What do the people say about me?" "They refer to you," his friend unreservedly replied, "as ḍarrāb, *nahhāb*, *qammār*, *wa khammār*—a womanizer, plunderer, gambler, and booze guzzler." "This," Rifʿat charged, "is the work of the merchants, an invention by them, and a product of their envy and jealousy. They have been accustomed to lay their hands on everything in the country and, if this is beyond their reach, they will be satisfied with nothing less than an apportionment that would leave the ruling power holding the reins of government and the merchants monopolizing money and the means of [economic] management."[5] While suggesting that the merchants and businessmen sought to undermine his position, Rifʿat conceded that he had cultivated "relations" with them, but contended that in this he was driven by the hope of "reducing the intensity of their hatred of the regime."[6]

Quite apart from an underlying motive to justify himself, there are, it is obvious, flaws in Rifʿat's assertions, in particular a proneness to exaggerate and to lump together the business class without regard to differences in values or aims between, at least, such elements as the traditional merchants and the nouveaux riches, or the relatively independent entrepreneurs and those whose wealth, as one Syrian businessman put it, "is political or has political cover or those who merely front for the security services and made their money swiftly and with little effort."[7]

For all that, there is little doubt that the well-connected business elite, in its various subdivisions, is very skillful in advancing and protecting its interests and in clearing away impediment after impediment from its path. It is true that it does not, in any direct sense, have its hands on the levers of high policy, and that the business class as a whole, having steered clear of formal affiliation with any political party, has had no footing in any of the Baʿth commands since 1963,[8] and occupied only 3 out of the 186 seats in the 1973–1977 sessions and 18 out of the 250 seats in the 1990–1994 sessions of the largely ceremonial People's Assembly.[9] Even so, things have been going the way of the business leaders to some extent, if interruptedly, since 1970, and increasingly and more meaningfully since the middle 1980s, in matters affecting not only commerce but also other parts of the economy's private sector.

Suggestive of the growing progress of businessmen is the 50 percent increase in the "special" membership of the Damascus Chamber of Commerce and the tripling of its "first class" membership between 1971 and 1990 (Table 17–1). The recent sharp decline in their tax burden by a scaling down of the business tax law also points to an unequivocal tendency on the part of the government to accommodate their interests: as is clear from Table 17–2, the maximum tax liability on net profits from business fell from 70.74 percent in 1974 to 45 percent in 1992. Even more favorable, from their standpoint, is Law No. 10 of May 5, 1991, for the Encouragement of Investment. Under this law, develop-

TABLE 17–1
Membership in the Damascus Chamber of Commerce by Class in Selected Years

Class	Number of Members 1971	Number of Members 1990	Minimum Capital in 1990 in Syrian pounds (SL)
Special	44	66	For public sector companies and private joint-stock companies, SL3 million; for individual establishments, SL 2 million
First	104	331	SL 1 million
Second	230	868	SL 800,000
Third	627	1,381	SL 600,000
Fourth	1,210	6,040	SL 300,000
Fifth	1,535	—[a]	—
Total	3,750	8,686	

Sources: Damascus Chamber of Commerce, *An-Nashratu-l-Iqtiṣādiyyah* (Economic Bulletin), No. 2 of 1981, p. 7; and No. 1 of 1991, p. 61. The figures for the minimum capital for the various classes are taken from Article 20 Paragraph B of the Internal Rules of the Chamber.

[a] The fifth class was annulled in 1982.

TABLE 17–2
Tax Liabilities on Net Profits from Business in 1974 and 1992

1974		1992	
Net Profit (selected amounts in Syrian pounds)	Tax Liability[a] (% of net profit)	Net Profit in Syrian Pounds	Tax Rate[a] %
10,000	14.74	Up to 20,000	10
20,000	18.09	Over 20,000 to 50,000	14
50,000	28.14	Over 50,000–100,000	18
100,000	42.54	Over 100,000–200,000	22
200,000	55.44	Over 200,000–400,000	26
300,000	61.97	Over 400,000–600,000	30
400,000	65.24	Over 600,000–800,000	35
500,000	68.54	Over 800,000–1,000,000	40
600,000	70.74	Over 1,000,000	45

Sources: For the 1974 figures, see Damascus Chamber of Commerce, *an-Nashratu-l-Iqtiṣādiyya* (Economic Bulletin), No. 2, August 1989, p. 25. For the 1992 figures, see Article 1 of Law No. 20 of 6 July 1991 relating to changes in the scale of income tax rates. These changes took effect in January 1992.

[a]Including surcharges for local administration, schools, and the national defence and war effort.

ment projects with tangible assets of more than 10 million Syrian pounds (converted at "the rate prevalent in neighboring countries"—$1 = 42/43 Syrian pounds in 1991) and duly approved by a Supreme Investment Council headed by the prime minister, enjoy among other advantages exemption from all taxes for a period of five years, if undertaken by individuals or private companies, and for a period of seven years, if undertaken by mixed companies with a public-sector participation of at least 25 percent. If more than 50 percent of the project's output is exported and the proceeds are transferred in hard currency through Syrian banks, its tax holiday may be extended by two years.[10]

The rise of businessmen to a greater role in the country's economy can be inferred from Table 17–3, which points to a marked expansion since 1986 in their share of the total value of Syria's registered foreign trade. Assuming for the moment the accuracy of the figures in the table, this share, insofar as imports are concerned, bounced up and down in the 1970s, declined in the first half of the succeeding decade, sinking to a record low of 8.3 percent in 1984, but rebounded subsequently, peaking at 65.3 percent in 1995, and as regards exports was, except for the year 1976, on a generally downward trend after 1973, bottoming at 7.6 percent in 1985, but went through a sizable growth afterward, climbing to as high as 48 percent in 1989. The figures relating to the value of the transactions upon which these percentages are based, however, do not lend themselves to a precise interpretation due to a number of factors: among others, the difficulty of determining the effect of inflation,[11] the tendency on the part of at least some merchants to exaggerate the value of their exports in the hope of increasing their access to import licenses, and the uncertainty as to whether, in the sets of official figures for the various years, due account was taken of the use since 1981 of different exchange rates for government and private-sector transactions.[12]

It is, nevertheless, beyond question that private businessmen have been forging ahead in Syria's foreign commerce from 1986 onward. In internal trading—on the retail front—they had the lion's share all along or, as *Tishrīn*, a government daily, put it in 1985, "the law of supply and demand prevails on the widest scale." Questioning the effectiveness of the official machinery of price control, the paper went on to affirm that "in the markets for fruits and vegetables middlemen have the last word." In the entire retail trade, *Tishrīn* added, "the government's share does not exceed 7 percent."[13] As is evident from Table 17–4, however, the public sector is still dominant in manufacturing, private capitalists being important mainly in light industry. Moreover, banking and the wholesale trade in wheat and cotton remain state monopolies.

Up to this point, in trying to ascertain the extent of the progress of private businessmen in recent years reliance has been placed on official statistics, which do not provide completely accurate indices of the real gains in the domain of private commerce, if only because they do not reflect the unusual growth in the volume of the "unofficial" or clandestine economy, or what is sometimes labeled by Damascenes as "the fourth branch of trade," that is, the trade in smuggled goods.[14] How rife this trade has been may be gathered from

TABLE 17–3
Value of Registered Imports and Exports by the Private Sector and Its Percentage Share of the Total Value of Syria's Registered Imports and Exports, 1972–1995

Year	*Value of Imports by Private Sector*[a] *(in billions of Syrian pounds)*	*Private Sector's % Share of Total Value of Imports*	*Value of Exports by Private Sector*[a]	*Private Sector's % Share of Total Value of Exports*
1972[b]	0.72	34.6	0.33	28.7
1973[b]	0.73	31.2	0.39	29.3
1974	1.11	24.2	0.37	12.6
1975	1.72	27.7	0.35	10.2
1976[b]	3.63	39.5	0.54	13.1
1977	2.93	27.9	0.50	11.9
1978	2.78	28.8	0.46	11.0
1979	3.62	27.7	0.52	8.1
1980	4.17	25.8	0.60	7.3
1981	4.23	21.4	0.72	8.8
1982	2.89	18.4	0.85	10.6
1983	2.11	11.8	0.82	10.8
1984	1.33	8.3	0.72	9.9
1985	2.45	15.8	0.49	7.6
1986	2.71	25.3	1.57	30.3
1987	5.99	21.5	3.37	22.2
1988[b]	6.68	26.7	5.53	36.7
1989	10.02	42.6	16.19	48.0
1990	12.40	46.0	21.11	44.6
1991	16.57	53.4	13.65	35.4
1992	24.54	62.6	7.37	21.2
1993	28.75	61.9	8.84	25.0
1994	38.30	62.4	13.68	34.3
1995	34.54	65.3	12.69	28.5

Sources: Syria, *Statistical Abstracts*, for various years.

Note: The figures do not, of course, include the value of smuggled goods.

[a]In rounded figures.

[b]In 1972 the official exchange rate per US $1 stood at 3.80/3.82 Syrian pounds, rose to SL 3.60/3.65 in 1973, but depreciated to SL 3.90/3.95 in 1976, and SL 11.225 in 1988; but several different rates were used for private-sector transactions from 1981 onward.

observations made in 1985 by a Syrian official at a seminar organized by the newspaper *Tishrīn*. "It is my belief," he said, "that the Customs Department is in possession of data which indicate that there are about 50,000 smugglers in this country." "It is probable," he added, "that through the contraband traffic no fewer than 10,000 have become millionaires."[15] Consonant with these remarks is an opinion—based also on probability—set forth in an unpublished report prepared in 1987 by a number of economic experts. "There are," the report read, "no estimates of the size of the unofficial economy but it is believed to

TABLE 17–4
Value of Gross Output of Private Industrial Sector at Current Prices and Its Percentage Share of the Value of Syria's Total Industrial Gross Output

Year	*Value of Output*[a] *(in billions of Syrian pounds)*	*% Share of Total Industrial Gross Output*
1970	0.85	32.6
1971–1973	—[b]	—
1974	2.51	37.6
1975–1978	—[b]	—
1979	4.99	28.4
1980	6.78	28.6
1981	7.13	21.4
1982	9.46	29.4
1983	10.56	27.3
1984	8.72	21.9
1985	8.81	22.1
1986	11.11	26.3
1987	13.47	24.4
1988	31.28	35.4
1989	33.84	30.4
1990	40.37	27.5
1991	44.83	28.2
1992	58.88	31.9
1993	70.36	34.8
1994	80.88	34.4

Sources: Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract*, *1972*, p. 148; *1984*, pp. 188–89; *1986*, pp. 210–11; *1990*, pp. 170–71; *1991*, pp. 170–71; *1992*, pp. 170–71; *1994*, pp. 171–73; and *1996*, pp. 182–84; and *idem, Aj-Jumhūriyyat-ul-ʿArabiyyatu-s-Sūriyyah tī Arqām, 1974–1975* (The Syrian Arab Republic in Figures) (Damascus, 1976), p. 14.

[a] In 1970 the official exchange rate per US $1 stood at 3.80/3.82 Syrian pounds, from 1979 to 1987 at SL 3.90/3.95 and from 1988 to the present at SL 11.25.

[b] Not available.

exceed—and possibly by much—30 percent of the Gross Domestic Product."[16] Unsurprisingly, the French News Agency reported on June 23, 1988—if an opposition journal is leveling with its readers—that Syrian currency estimated by Lebanese economic circles at between 50 and 90 million pounds (roughly between 1.4 and 2.6 million dollars) slipped daily across Syria's border with Lebanon, much of it ending in the eastern sector of Beirut, where the Syrian army had no presence. With part of the smuggled money, consumer goods, including luxuries, were purchased in Lebanese markets for ultimate conveyance into Syria by stealth. Another part was converted into hard currency and kept in foreign bank accounts, being earmarked for the financing of illicit im-

ports into Syria from Europe and the Far East. For the purposes of the surreptitious trade with Turkey, the remaining currency was said to have been exchanged for gold ingots.[17]

It is difficult to identify the big operators in the secret, tortuous, and seemingly recession-proof world of smugglers, but well-informed Syrians affirm that some businessmen from among the elements recently risen to wealth are involved, not directly but through professional agents who have armed bands at their beck and call and, being amply remunerated, their own fleets of trucks and chains of warehouses and hideouts. The businessmen in question are also said to be skilled at circumventing difficulties and to have silent associates high up in the Customs Administration and in the Security and Intelligence services.[18] Back in 1981 a member of the People's Assembly who, to all appearance, was familiar with the ins and outs of the clandestine traffic, enlightened his colleagues on its elaborate division of labor, with specific functions—such as the securing of roads, the purchase or transport or distribution of illicit commodities, and the bribing of customs officials—assigned, he pointed out, to specialized but mutually dependent groups.[19] A respected Syrian economist implicated unnamed American tobacco companies: he maintained that they compensated smugglers for losses in the cigarette trade incurred through confiscations by customs officials.[20]

As to the methods of the smugglers and their allies, it would be enough to mention—as the member of the People's Assembly just cited brought to light—that the chief of a customs detachment lived under the threat of violent death and did not "dare to move outside his home" because, without counting the risk to himself, he had seized two trucks loaded with prohibited goods, one on the Tripoli-Ḥimṣ road and the other near Maṣyāf, and had refused an offer of 100,000 Syrian pounds to release one of the impounded trucks.[21]

But officials higher up do not appear to be as diligent or as earnest in combating the smugglers as this unfortunate middling customs employee. In a 1993 interview Asad acknowledged that "smuggling is a problem," but indirectly suggested that Syria has long borders and urged that his regime had "thwarted many undertakings" by illicit dealers, and that its courts had passed "severe sentences" on those whom it was able to apprehend. "However," Asad added, "the smugglers are usually armed and violent and there were frequent clashes between them and the security forces which caused loss of lives on both sides."[22] Nevertheless, a complaint recurrently heard in Damascus is that the government, while cracking down from time to time on the smaller smugglers, tends except in few instances to turn a blind eye to the activities of the well-connected bigger culprits, leaving them unpunished. In this regard, when a delegate to the 1985 Baʿth Regional Congress raised the issue of outlawing the Lebanese black market, a Baʿthist lady reportedly stood up and boldly wondered how could it be proscribed when "all present" thrived on it, "drawing a hearty laugh from Asad."[23]

It remains to account for the ability of at least the bonafide businessmen to influence the government toward policies sensitive to their needs and interests,

as is borne out by the already highlighted favorable legislation on many of the issues uppermost on their minds.

Although the increasing integration of the world market and the recent changes in the international balance of power have been important contributory factors, of direct bearing as a source of their influence is their money, much of which is socked away in foreign bank accounts far beyond the reach of a government keen on attracting it back, particularly in years when foreign aid to Syria markedly diminishes, as after the collapse of the Soviet Union or during much of the 1980s, when help from the Arab Gulf states almost dried up in the wake of Asad's alliance with the Iran of Rūḥullah Khumaynī. Congruently, since the introduction of Investment Law No. 10 of 1991[24] more capital has been coming into Syria than leaving it. According to official sources, from May 1991 to August 1992 new investments within the country, mostly by Syrians but partly by foreigners, amounted to $1.6 billion and, on the average, came to about $3.76 billion in 1996. Some of these investments were made by Syrian expatriates who are said to control between 50 and 60 billion dollars.[25]

No less significant as an explanation for the influence of businessmen is their success in *culturally* overcoming senior officials in key state institutions, that is, in imbuing them with the spirit of gain by which they themselves are animated, and exploiting, to no little degree, their new hunger for money. This process gained ground in measure as the regime entered into a fog ideologically, and many of its elements lost their sense of purpose. As early as 1977 corruption grew so rampant that Asad deemed it necessary to set up a Commission of Inquiry into Illicit Gains, empowering it to deal with every form of bribery or abuse of office, and with a view to distancing himself from these practices, used the occasion to donate to the state "the few patches of land which I inherited . . . and the house that I own in Damascus and bought in 1964 . . . with a loan from the military establishment."[26] But a year later a member of the People's Assembly still bemoaned "the ability of the merchants . . . and their agents to win over, by their own special means, many of the officials responsible for the public sector,"[27] and in 1980 the Seventh Baʿth Regional Congress felt bound to recommend "the screening of comrades whose movable and immovable assets exceed half a million Syrian pounds and the application to them of the principle: 'where did you get this from?' "[28] But all apparently to little avail. In 1985 the Eighth Baʿth Regional Congress decried the lingering corruption "in a number of state institutions,"[29] and in 1987 a congress of the General Federation of Labor Unions threw into relief "the many instances in which the parasitic bourgeoisie, working hand-in-glove with officials in responsible positions . . . played fast and loose with the existing laws and rules."[30] To this day payoffs and kickbacks remain, it would seem, beyond remedy.

The businessmen engaging in such practices enjoy, it goes without saying, unique privileges. The higher the standing of their silent partners in the government, the greater are their own economic chances. As a traditional Damascene merchant put it in 1992, "the advantages they get are denied to others; that which is permissible to them is forbidden to me."[31]

Some members of the business class are undoubtedly scripted and directed by the men close to the center of power, but sometimes it is difficult to say who is pulling the strings and who is dancing on them, if only because the more powerful, while adept in the arts of constraint or restraint, are less knowledgeable when it comes to the intricacies of the economy or the management of money. In any case, both elements are enriching themselves at the expense of the public.

The buying of persons in authority or with power by businessmen is not something peculiar to Syria, of course. It is enough in this regard to call to mind an observation made not so long ago by a Washington insider and a more recent advice by a British lobbyist. In the U.S. Congress, remarked the Washington insider, "on too many occasions, the laws were not passed—they were purchased."[32] The advice by the lobbyist was given to a foreigner who was having difficulty gaining approval for his purchase of Harrods, the renowned London department store. "You need," he told him, "to rent an MP just like you rent a London taxi!"[33]

CHAPTER 18

The Organization of Power at the Second Tier of Asad's Polity and Its Partaking, among Other Features, of a Basic Trait of Peasant Life

The Elemental Instinct for Family and Clan and Its Impact

For very long in most of Syria's villages the family and, to a lesser degree, its extensions—the clan and the tribe—formed the fundamental units of life. From the standpoint of the peasants in these villages, the ties of blood and marriage transcended in significance all other social ties. In their eyes, the kin group enjoyed more moral authority than the state, which they in essence distrusted. This feeling was particularly intense in areas like the ʿAlawī and Druze mountains, especially in the Ottoman period. In times of danger it was in the first place on the kinship unit that the peasants relied for protection, and without the mutual help which it provided they would have had difficulty warding off hunger in years of severe drought.

With many ʿAlawīs the feeling for family and clan extended to the whole ʿAlawī community, not only by virtue of the ties that their shared religious tenets generated or the disabilities and persecution that the community endured over the centuries but also by dint of their belief that the ʿAlawīs were originally one Arab tribe. As Dr. Aḥmad, a son of Sulaymān al-Aḥmad—the late eminent ʿAlawī Imām and holder of the title of "Servant of the Prophet's Household" (*Khādim ahl-il-Bayt*)—put it, the ʿAlawīs "are first and foremost united by kinship, being almost all cousins stemming from one and the same lineage." "In the manner of other Arab tribes," he added, "they inescapably branched out into clans and sub-clans."[1] That this observation may not accord with the historical facts is beside the point. What matters is that it reflects what many—but not all—ʿAlawīs believe. It is necessary to add that, for several generations now, many of the ʿAlawī husbandmen of the Latakia coast and the Banyās plain have been clanless, and that with the younger and educated ʿAlawīs, even those who have their roots in the mountains, clan ties are in various degrees of decomposition. Indeed some have lost all traces of clanship.

The elemental instincts of many—particularly older—ʿAlawīs for family, clan, and community have left, to a lesser or greater degree, their imprint on Asad's power structure. As is clear from Tables 18–1 and 18–2, out of the thirty-one officers whom Asad hand picked between 1970 and 1997 as chief figures in the armed forces, the elite military formations, and the apparatuses of security and intelligence, no fewer than nineteen or 61.3 percent have been ʿAlawīs. Of the latter, eight stemmed from his own tribe, al-Kalbiyyah, and four

TABLE 18–1
Chief Figures in the Armed Forces, the Elite Military Formations, and the Apparatuses of Security and Intelligence, 1970–1997

Name (and Highest Rank Attained)	*Post*	*Place of Birth*	*Date of Birth*	*Sect*	*Tribal Affiliation, if ʿAlawī*	*Family Relationship to President, If Any*	*Class Origin*
Muṣṭafa Ṭlās (*ʿimād* or Army Corps general)	Chief of staff, 1968–1972; minister of defense and deputy commander-in-chief of armed forces since 22 March 1972 but, in terms of real power, carries little weight	Rastan (north of Ḥimṣ)	1932	Sunnī (paternal grandmother of Circassian and mother of Turkish origin)			Lesser rural notability; son of a mukhtār of Rastan and former contractor who furnished provisions to the Turkish army; member of the agricultural clan of Firzāt
Yūsuf Shakkūr (major general)	Chief of staff, 1972–1974; deputy minister of defense in the mid-1970s; subsequently served as ambassador to France and then as deputy foreign minister	Aleppo	1928	Greek Orthodox Christian			Of modest and poor background. When still a child, his father migrated to Brazil
Ḥikmat al-Shihābī (*ʿimād* or Army Corps general)	Chief of military intelligence 1970–1974; chief of staff, 1974–1998; had access to Asad but was a purely professional officer	al-Bāb (northeast of Aleppo)	1931	Sunnī (of Kurdish origin)			Lesser landed rural notability; son of a middle landowner from a locally influential family
Nājī Jamīl (major general)	Deputy commander of air force, 1970; commander of air force, 1971–1978; head of National Security Bureau, Regional Baʿth Command, 1970–1978; deputy defense minister for air force affairs, 1975–1978; lost favor subsequently.	Dayr az-Zūr	1930	Sunnī			Petty official class; son of a policeman from the Dayr-az-Zūr clan of ash-Shawālghah (allies of the Khurshān clan, originally the main social base of the Baʿth party in Dayr az-Zūr)
ʿAdnān Dabbāgh (brigadier general)	Chief of general intelligence, 1970–1976; minister of interior 1976–1980; died in first half of 1980s	Aleppo	?	Sunnī			?

Muḥammad al-Khūlī (major general)	From 1964 to 1970 deputy chief, and from 1970 to 1987 chief of air intelligence; from about 1971 or so until 1987 served simultaneously as chairman of the Presidential Intelligence Committee; from 1987 to mid-1994 deputy commander and since mid-1994 de facto commander of air force and reportedly exercised all along and still exercises much influence as an intelligence advisor to the president	Bayt Yāshūṭ, a village in the district of Jableh	1937	ʿAlawī	al-Ḥaddādīn		Petty landed family; a descendant of a peasant overseer and son of a religious shaykh (according to an ʿAlawite source)
ʿAlī Ḥaydar (major general)	Commander of the special forces from 1968 to 1988, when affected by aneurysm; he ceased wielding direct control over his units but was back at the helm in the early 1990s, only to be apprehended in the summer of 1994 reportedly for "insubordination"; released subsequently	Ḥillat ʿĀrā, a village in the Jableh district	Around 1932	ʿAlawī	al-Ḥaddādīn		Religious middling landed rural notability; son of a man of religion and nephew of Shaykh Aḥmad Muḥammad Ḥaydar, an influential religious reformer who died in 1981 and whose *qubbah* (memorial shrine) is held in reverence locally
Rifʿat al-Asad (brigadier general)	Head of commandos and paratroopers in the Damascus area and at the major air bases of Mezzeh and Ḍmeir, 1966–1970; commander of *Sarāyā-d-Difāʿ* (defense companies), 1971–1984; nominally vice president for security affairs from 1984 to February 1998 but actually excluded from any active role	Al-Qirdāḥah, a village in the district of Jableh (now the chief town of the district of al-Qirdāḥah)	1937	ʿAlawī	al-Kalbiyyah	Brother	Petty landed peasant notability; son of a peasant and leader of alʿĀylah quarter of Qirdāḥah
ʿAlī al-Madanī (major general)	Commandant, military police, 1966–1976; chief of general intelligence, 1976–1979	Ḥamāh	?	Sunnī			Petty trading class; son of a seller of a sweet called *jarjaʿah* in Ḥamāh

TABLE 18–1 (Continued)

Name (and Highest Rank Attained)	*Post*	*Place of Birth*	*Date of Birth*	*Sect*	*Tribal Affiliation, if ʿAlawī*	*Family Relationship to President, If Any*	*Class Origin*
ʿAdnān al-Asad (major general)	Commander of the struggle companies since 1973	Al-Qirdāḥah	1942	ʿAlawī	al-Kalbiyyah	Cousin	Petty landed peasant notability; son of a peasant
Aḥmad Saʿīd Ṣāliḥ (major general)	Chief of political security, 1970–1987; deputy minister of interior since 1987	Al-Mukharram, a village in Ḥimṣ province	1935	ʿAlawī	al-Khayyāṭīn		Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
ʿAlī Dūbā (major general)	Chief of military intelligence since 1974; recently "promoted" to advisor to the president on military intelligence or to deputy chief of staff for security affairs, but apparently still controls the military intelligence corps	Qurfayṣ, a village in the district of Jableh	1933	ʿAlawī	al-Matāwirah		Religious petty landed lesser rural notability, son of a religious shaykh
ʿAbd-ul-Karīm Razzūq (brigadier general)	Commander of the missile corps and air defence forces, 197?–June 1977 (when he was killed by Muslim militants)	Al-Mukharram, a village in Ḥimṣ province	Around 1935	ʿAlawī	al-Khayyāṭīn		Landless peasantry; son of a sharecropper
ʿAlī Aṣlān (*ʿimād* or Army Corps general)	Commander of the Fifth Mechanized Infantry Division, 1970–1975; commander of Syrian component of Arab Deterrent Force in Lebanon, 1976–1978; first deputy chief of staff, responsibe for operations, 1979–1998; chief of staff since 1998	Al-Qabū, a village in the district of Jableh	1933	ʿAlawī	al-Kalbiyyah		Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
ʿAlī Ṣāliḥ (major general)	Commander of the missile corps and air defence forces since 1977	Ṣafīṭā	1935	ʿAlawī	al-Marāwirah		Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant

Muḥammad Naṣīf (major general)	Chief of the internal security branch of general intelligence since mid-1970s	al-Laqbeh, a village near Maṣyāf	Around 1939?	ʿAlawī	al-Kalbiyyah		Petty landed peasant notability; son of a village notable who is said to have "lived on *atāwas* (exactions)"
ʿAdnān Makhlūf (major general)	Deputy commander of the defense companies, 1971–1979; commander from 1979 to June 1995 of the Republican Guard, a force which was initially of lesser significance than the defense companies but has become from 1984 onward a main prop of the regime security system in the Damascus area	Bustān al-Bāshā, a village in the district of Jableh	Around 1939	ʿAlawī	al-Ḥaddādīn	Cousin of Asad's wife	Landed and well-to-do village notability; son of a landowner and overseer of peasants
Shafīq Fayyāḍ (*ʿimād* or army corps general)	Commander of the Seventh Mechanized Infantry Division, 1973–1978; commander of the elite politically relevant Third Armored Division since 1978, but reportedly incapacitated in 1991–1992 because of a heart attack	ʿAyn al-ʿArūs, a village in the district of Jableh	?	ʿAlawī	al-Kalbiyyah	Cousin (son of Asad's aunt); a son of Fayyāḍ is also the husband of a daughter of the president's brother Rifʿat	Petty landed peasant notability; son of a peasant
Ibrahīm aṣ-Ṣāfī (major general)	Commander of the politically relevant First Armored Division since 1978	Ash-Sharā-shīr, a village in the district of Jableh	?	ʿAlawī	al-Khayyāṭīn		Landless peasantry; son of a sharecropper
Nazīh Zurayr (brigadier general)	Chief of general intelligence, 1974–1984	Al-Qaryatayn, Ḥimṣ province	1941	Sunnī			From a family of nomadic background
Ṣubhī Ḥaddād (major general)	Commander of air force, 1978–1987	Ḥamāh	?	Sunnī			From a family of artisans

TABLE 18–1 (Continued)

Name (and Highest Rank Attained)	*Post*	*Place of Birth*	*Date of Birth*	*Sect*	*Tribal Affiliation, if ʿAlawī*	*Family Relationship to President, If Any*	*Class Origin*
Fūʾād al-ʿAbsī (high-ranking police officer)	Chief of general intelligence, 1984–1987; governor of Ḥimṣ formerly	Jobar, a village in the Ghūṭah of Damascus	?	Sunnī			Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
ʿAdnān Badr Ḥasan (major general)	Chief of political security since 1987; commander of Ninth Mechanized Infantry Division formerly	Ḥimṣ (originally from al-Mukharram al-Fūqānī)	?	ʿAlawī	al-Khayyāṭīn		Petty landed peasantry; a son of a peasant
Ibrahīm Ḥwayjah (major general)	Chief of air force intelligence since 1987	Bayt Yashūt, a village in the district of Jableh	?	ʿAlawī	al-Ḥaddādīn		Landless peasantry; son of a sharecropper
Mājid Saʿīd	Chief of general intelligence, 1987–1994	Damascus	?	Sunnī			From an urban middle-class family
Ghāzī Kanʿān (major general)	A key figure in the military intelligence service; chief of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon; viewed as a possible successor to ʿAlī Dūbā	Baḥamrah, a village in the district of Jableh	Around 1933	ʿAlawī	al-Kalbiyyah	His son Yaʿrib is married to a daughter of Asad's brother Jamīl; Kanʿān is also a cousin of Shafīq Fayyād (a son of Asad's aunt)	Well-to-do peasantry; son of a landed peasant

ʿAlī Malāḥafjī (major general)	Commander of air force from 1987 to mid-1994	Aleppo	?	Sunnī			From an artisanal family (makers of bedspreads)
Bāsil al-Asad (major)	A trainee, successively, in civil engineering and as an air force pilot; an increasingly influential figure in the Republican Guard from about 1987 till his death in a car accident on January 21, 1994; had been formally chief of presidential security	Damascus	1962	ʿAlawī	al-Kalbiyyah	Asad's eldest son	Petty landed peasant notability
ʿAlī Ḥabīb (major general)	Commander of the special forces since August 1994; formerly Commander of the Seventh Mechanized Division	Ṣafīṭā	?	ʿAlawī	al-Matāwirah		Religious petty landed notability; son of a religious shaykh
Bashshār al-Asad (major)	Although trained as an eye doctor, he has apparently succeeded his brother Bāsil in 1994 as a key figure in the Republican Guard	Damascus	1965	ʿAlawī	al-Kalbiyyah	Asad's son	Petty landed peasant notability
Bashīr an-Najjār	Chief of general intelligence since 1994; formerly director general of the Customs Department	Damascus	Around 1945	Sunnī			From an urban lower middle-class family

Sources: I am indebted to many Syrians (mostly ʿAlawīs) for the details in this table. Though I checked and rechecked these details with different persons, the possibility of factual errors cannot be altogether excluded.

TABLE 18–2
Summary of Table 18–1

Sectarian Affiliation			
	No.	*%*	*Sect's Roughly Estimated % in Total 1995 Population*
Sunnīs	11	35.5	about 73
ʿAlawīs	19	61.3	about 12
Christian	1	3.2	about 10
Total	31	100.0	

Tribal Affiliation of ʿAlawīs		
	No.	*%*
Al-Kalbiyyah (Asad's tribe)	8	42.1
Al-Ḥaddādīn (tribe of Asad's wife)	4	21.05
Al-Khayyāṭīn	4	21.05
Al-Matāwirah	3	15.8
Total	19	100.0

ʿAlawīs' Degree of Kinship to Asad		
Close kinsmen by blood or marriage	7	36.8
Others	12	63.2
Total	19	100.0

Class Origin		
	No.	*%*
Peasantry		
Landless or sharecropping peasants	3	
Petty landed peasants	5	
Well-to-do peasant	1	
Total	9[a]	29.1
Lesser rural or village notability		
Petty landed peasant notables	7	
Petty landed religious rural notables	2	
Contracting mukhtār or rural town headman	1	
Middling landed rural notables	2	
Middling landed religious rural notable	1	
Total	13[b]	41.9
Others		
Petty official	1	
Petty trader	1	
Petty artisan	1	
Family of bedouin origin	1	
Total	4[c]	12.9
No precise information	5	16.1
Grand total	31	100.0

[a]All ʿAlawīs except for 1 Sunnī petty landed peasant.
[b]11 ʿAlawīs and 2 Sunnīs.
[c]All Sunnīs.

others from his wife's tribe, al-Ḥaddādīn. Of these twelve, seven were drawn from kinsmen closely related to him by blood or marriage, three of whom—his brother Rifʿat, his wife's cousin ʿAdnān Makhlūf, and his own cousin Shafīq Fayyāḍ—commanded or command the more crucial of the elite striking units, namely, the Defense Companies, which formed the chief pillar of his regime from 1971 to 1984; the Republican Guard, which has become one of its main props from 1984 onward; and the Third Armored Division, which since 1978 has been used as a back-up force in subduing or chastising the regime's internal enemies. Moreover, Asad's eldest son Bāsil played a key role in the Republican Guard from about 1987 till his death in a car accident in 1994, and was involved in an important program for the training of aḍ- Ḍubbāṭ al-Qādah or the "officers-leaders," in which carefully selected young men receive advanced education in various fields at the expense of the military establishment, and are apparently being primed to succeed the present generation of leaders in the armed forces in the future. Another of Asad's sons—Bashshār—has, it would seem, taken over his brother's role in the Republican Guard and is also connected with the "officers-leaders" program.

The Lesser Rural Notability and the Inner Core of the Regime's Leadership

Out of the nineteen ʿAlawīs who filled or fill positions at this level of the power structure, no fewer than eleven or 57.9 percent descend from the lesser rural or village notability, which owned land but on a small or middling scale and, while not wealthy, enjoyed influence and prestige among the local peasants. Only three or 15.8 percent are descendants of sharecroppers. In other words, the majority does not come from families at the lower end of the rural income or status ladder. Moreover, four are sons of religious shaykhs, including ʿAlī Dūbā, the chief of military intelligence since 1974, and ʿAlī Ḥaydar, the commander of the Special Forces from 1968 to 1994, who is also a nephew of Shaykh Aḥmad Muḥammad Ḥaydar, a religious leader renowned in the ʿAlawī Mountains, particularly among the members of the Ḥaddādīn tribe, for his reformist ideals. Shaykh Ḥaydar, whose qubbah or memorial shrine is held in reverence in his native village of Ḥillat ʿĀrā, sought to free the ʿAlawī faith from superstitions and bring it more into line with modern strains of thought. One other relevant point bears emphasis: the descendants of religious shaykhs, even if they are not themselves shaykhs, retain influence among the villagers or in the larger tribal or religious community, and are respected through their families. This is true at least, in the instance of ʿAlī Ḥaydar.

It will be recalled that officers with roots in the lesser rural or village notability were also preponderant in the Military Committee that formed the backbone of the Baʿth regime of the 1960s. (For the supporting evidence and the historical factors accounting for the economic and social rise of this class, turn to Chapter 12.)

Is Asad's Regime Sectarian?

A close scrutiny of Table 18–1 will show that from 1971 to 1994 the post of air force commander was invariably held by Sunnīs, that is, successively by Nājī Jamīl, Ṣubḥī Ḥaddād, and ʿAlī Malāḥafjī. Again from 1970 to the present only Sunnīs—namely, ʿAdnān Dabbāgh, ʿAlī al-Madanī, Nazīh Zurayr, Fūʾād al-ʿAbsī, Mājid Saʿīd, and Bashīr an-Naṣṣār—have been appointed to the office of chief of the civilian General Intelligence. Similarly, from 1974 to 1998 a Sunnī—Ḥikmat al-Shihābī—was chief of staff, and since 1972 Muṣṭafa Ṭlās, also a Sunnī, has been defense minister. However, none of these officers has or had at any point the power of crucial decision or independent initiative. They clearly drew their authority from Asad and had no military underpinning of their own.

It is true that in the first phase of Asad's rule, that is, roughly between 1970 and 1975, some of them—Ṭlās, Shihābī, and Nājī Jamīl among others—had within their specified range of activities relatively more freedom than in subsequent years. This is explicable partly by the personal ties Asad had forged with them since his days at the military academy or the air force college, and their contribution to Asad's victory over General Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, his ʿAlawite rival and Syria's strongman in the second half of the 1960s. But more significant as a causal factor was the relaxed internal political climate of the day, which had its roots in the wide public support Asad's contemporary policies enjoyed. Besides, Asad was then still in the process of consolidating his primary power base. Even at that time, however, trusted aides from his own kin group or community kept a sharp eye on Sunnīs in high military or security posts and had the necessary resources to anticipate, contain, or counter any move unauthorized by him. For example, although Nājī Jamīl stood at the head of the air force, no combat aircraft could take off from any military airfield without the knowledge of agents of the ʿAlawite Muḥammad al-Khūlī, chief of Air Force Intelligence and chairman of the Presidential Intelligence Committee. Moreover, commandos and paratroopers enrolled in the Defense Companies under Asad's brother Rifʿat guarded Syria's major air base of al-Mezzeh on the outskirts of Damascus and the Ḍmeir airfield for operational fighters sixty kilometers to the northeast of the capital. At the same time, the ʿAlawite ʿAbd-ul-Karīm Razzūq controlled the Missile Corps and Air Defense Forces.

Nevertheless, it was during the regime's "time of troubles," that is, in the years 1976–1982—a period marked by controversial Syrian policies in Lebanon, deep erosions in Asad's appeal, recurring waves of deadly assaults by Islamic militants, and cruel reprisals, particularly at Ḥamāh, by the Defense Companies and other elite units—that Asad's dependence on his kinsmen and the ʿAlawī brass and soldiery intensified and became the indispensable safeguard of his paramount power.

After that, high-ranking Sunnī officers counted, with few exceptions, less and less. Ṭlās is still defense minister, but his functions have since the second half

of the 1970s been increasingly ceremonial in nature. An ʿAlawite friend of Rifʿat al-Asad who served under him in the Defense Companies was, for all his bias, not far from the truth when he wrote in 1992: "Ṭlās is in the army but at the same time seems as if he is not of the army; he neither binds nor loosens and has no role other than that of the tail in the beast."[2]

As for Ḥikmat al-Shihābī, he had been all along a purely professional officer. His duties were in essence technical, but he remained close to Asad and was often entrusted by him with sensitive missions abroad. Thus at certain points in the Lebanese civil conflict he acted as mediator on Asad's behalf. In the 1980s he reportedly represented him on several occasions in secret meetings with American officials in Washington from which Syria's ambassador to the United States was excluded.[3] As chief of staff, he conducted negotiations in 1994 in Washington with his Israeli counterpart, Ehud Barak, who portrayed him as "focused and highly intelligent."[4] According to well-informed Syrians, however, when it came to moving any Syrian military unit of any important size, the key figure was not Shihābī but ʿAlī Aṣlān, the ʿAlawite first deputy chief of staff for operations from 1979 to 1998 and chief of staff since 1998.

As regards Najī Jamīl, the only other prominent military member of Asad's little knot of Sunnī personal friends, he first incurred the president's displeasure when he ventured in the mid-seventies to express, in officers' circles, misgivings about the growing role of Rifʿat al-Asad, who was then still in his brother's good graces. But Jamīl lost his posts as air force chief and head of the National Security Bureau of the Baʿth Regional Command only in 1978, and mainly because, as was commonly said, Asad felt that he did not do enough to uncover the secret cells of Muslim militants responsible for the then mounting wave of violence. In 1984 he reappeared on the scene at the height of the "succession crisis" (soon to be discussed) and, to the surprise of many Syrians, on the side of Rifʿat. It later transpired, however, that he did this at the direct request of the president, who feared that Rifʿat, if left without allies and the restraint they could bring to bear, would behave recklessly and make a mess of things. But this did not save Jamīl from being subsequently excluded, like Rifʿat, from any active role.

The increasing reliance of Asad, from his regime's "time of troubles" onward, on members of his own community is palpably reflected in Table 18–3. Apart from the special regime-shielding military formations, over which they had all along exclusive control, ʿAlawī generals commanded in 1973 only two out of the five regular army divisions but in 1985 no fewer than six—and in 1992 as many as seven—out of the nine divisions now constituting Syria's regular army.

Is it justifiable to infer from the preceding observations that Asad's regime is at bottom sectarian? Although it is beyond question that Asad's power base is at its core solidly ʿAlawī and that this feature of his rule was in part instrumental in producing in the second half of the seventies and the first half of the eighties a political climate charged with confessionalism and a grievous rift in Syrian opinion along sectarian lines, there is at the same time little evidence that in his

TABLE 18–3
Names and Denominational Affiliations of Commanders of Army Divisions (Excluding the Defense Companies, the Republican Guard, and the Special Forces) in 1973, 1985, and 1992

Division	*1973*		*1985*		*1992*	
	Name of Commander	*Sect*	*Name of Commander*	*Sect*	*Name of Commander*	*Sect*
Divisions formed prior to 1973 war						
1st Armored	Tawfīq aj-Jahanī	ʿAlawī[a]	Ibrahīm aṣ-Ṣāfī	ʿAlawī[b]	Ibrahīm aṣ-Ṣāfī	ʿAlawī[b]
3rd Armored	Muṣṭafa Sharba	Ismāʿīlī	Shafīq Fayyāḍ	ʿAlawī[a]	Shafīq Fayyāḍ	ʿAlawī[a]
5th Mechanized Infantry	ʿAlī Aṣlān	ʿAlawī[a]	Aḥmad ʿAbd-ar-Razzāq an-Nabī	Sunnī	ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd Jamāl	?
7th Mechanized Infantry	ʿUmar Abrash	Sunnī	ʿAlī Ḥabīb	ʿAlawī[c]	ʿAlī Ḥabīb	ʿAlawī[c]
9th Mechanized Infantry	Ḥasan Turkmānī	Sunnī	ʿAdnān Badr Ḥasan	ʿAlawī[b]	Nadīm ʿAbbās	ʿAlawī[a]
Divisions formed after 1973						
10th Armored			Ibrahīm Dāūd	Shiʿī?	?	?
11th Armored			Muḥsin Salīm ʿAmmār	Druze	Tawfīq Jallūd	ʿAlawī
14th Armored			Sulaymān ʿIsa	ʿAlawī	ʿIzzat Zaydān	ʿAlawī
569th Armored (the official appellation since 1984 of the reorganized Defense Companies)			Ḥikmat Ibrahīm	ʿAlawī[a]	Ḥikmat Ibrahīm	ʿAlawī[a]

[a]From the Kalbiyyah tribe.
[b]From the Khayyāṭīn tribe.
[c]From the Matāwirah tribe.

economic policies Asad gave a marked preference to the interests of the ʿAlawī community, or that the majority of the ʿAlawīs enjoy more of the amenities of life than the majority of the Syrian people.

If anything, there have been complaints by ʿAlawīs from the highlands that the bulk of the peasants in their areas are destitute of comforts and still dependent for tillage on erratic weather conditions. Despite the electrification of their villages and the gains they made in the field of education, their real earnings from agriculture appear to have been in general on a slow downgrade, at least in the last ten years or so, and only in some cases on a very gradual upscale. To make both ends meet they have often to seek additional sources of revenue. The net annual income of poor families with small landholdings—that is, of the majority of the peasants—in the ʿAlawī Mountains did not exceed, according to a field study sponsored by the Peasants' General Union, 500 Syrian pounds or $139.86 in the 1950s[5] and, on the basis of rough estimates by montane ʿAlawīs,[6] rarely amounted to 30,000 Syrian pounds or about $600 in 1991. Assuming the accuracy of these figures, it is doubtful that they represent a real increase in income, if due account is taken of the sharp decline in the purchasing power not only of the Syrian pound but also of the American dollar in the intervening period.

It is noteworthy that opponents of the regime from all denominations admit that the generality of the ʿAlawīs do not enjoy privileged treatment and are as politically marginalized as the rest of the people. For example, Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī, a Druze and the secretary general of the Baʿth party from 1963 to 1964, affirmed in 1988 that "the ʿAlawīs who enjoy special advantages are in respect to number inconsiderable." Earlier, in the last article written before his assassination and published posthumously, Ṣalāḥ-ud-Dīn al-Bīṭār, a Sunnī cofounder of the Baʿth party, dwelt on "the necessity" of distinguishing between the regime and "the great body of ʿAlawīs who had no role in establishing it and are part of the silent majority of the people who resist its crimes at least with their hearts." Even ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn of the Muslim Brotherhood conceded that "many of the ʿAlawīs are oppressed."[7]

As regards the ʿAlawīs in the officer corps who are, on the whole, better off than the ʿAlawī peasants, the prominent ʿAlawī dissident Dr. Aḥmad Sulaymān al-Aḥmad insisted in 1988 that "the great majority of our officers [ʿAlawīs and non-ʿAlawīs] live at the poverty level." "It cannot be otherwise," he added, "if only because an honest officer has, like other honest employees, merely his pay for income and often supports a large family and has, in most instances, to provide for the education of a brother or a sister."[8]

It is difficult to say to what extent this assertion accords with the facts. In some respects it runs counter to a widely held view that the officer corps is a pampered element of the community in salary, pensions, state loans on very easy terms, cheap goods from army cooperatives, and other privileges, such as subsidized housing: in 1977 Defense Minister Muṣṭafa Ṭlās himself revealed in the People's Assembly that "the Military Housing Establishment charges military officers [over a specified period] only between 46,000 and 64,000 Syrian

pounds for houses in Damascus whose real value is as high as 170,000 or even 200,000 Syrian pounds."[9] In disclosing this fact, which was adduced by way of example and reflected in substance a practice that was in effect not only in Damascus but also in other parts of the country, Ṭlās sought to justify the enactment of Decree No. 4 of 1977, which prohibited beneficiaries from selling houses thus acquired before five years had elapsed from the date they took possession of them and earlier than "the payment of their [nominal] value in full."[10] It would not be altogether surprising that the acquisition of such houses was easier for high-powered than for middle or low-ranking officers.

The Abuse of Authority in High Places and Its Prime Symbol

There is little doubt that many—but not all—senior officers, who are close to the center of power and on whom attention must now be refocused, have grown rich in office. The veteran Syrian politician Akram Ḥūrānī, who had his own knowledgeable sources, maintained in 1985 that Shafīq Fayyāḍ, a cousin of Asad and the commander of the Third Division since 1978, had built a mansion at a cost of 56 million Syrian pounds or about $1.86 million in ʿAyn al-ʿArūs, his native village, and that ʿAlī Dūbā, the chief of military intelligence since 1974, had sunk 80 million Syrian pounds or about $2.6 million into an even more palatial residence in Qurfayṣ.[11] These affirmations—and the excessively large amounts involved—could not be independently verified. But the essential point that Ḥūrānī meant to convey was that the two generals and others at their level of power had in one way or another manipulated their influence to channel riches into their hands. It is, of course, necessary to be wary when handling the evidence of opponents of the regime. At the same time, there is a general feeling in Syria that underhand practices and illicit gains in high places have gone out of control. It is significant that when, on a trip to a village in the ʿAlawī country in 1992, this writer, catching sight of a stately residence perched on a hill, wondered about the identity of its owner, the ʿAlawī taxi driver volunteered: "it belongs to a man in authority, that is, to a thief!" He said at once too much and too little but, having been warned by Syrian friends that some cabmen work as informers for the security services, I did not press for an elaboration.

Until 1985, when he was effectively driven from public life, the prime symbol of the corruption afflicting the regime was the president's brother Rifʿat. That he took shortcuts to wealth cannot be refuted. Even if it is assumed that the legitimate emoluments of his post as commander of the Defense Companies amounted to double or triple the official salary of Syria's vice president or its prime minister, which came to 2,500 Syrian pounds a month in 1973[12] and may have risen to 5,000 Syrian pounds by 1984, there is no way that he could have permissibly accumulated the vast sums needed for the investments he made in real estate in Syria, Europe, and the United States. It is a matter of public knowledge that in August 1982 he paid for a Georgian-style villa on Halter

Court in Potomac, Maryland, $1.1 million with a cashier's check drawn on the Potomac Valley Bank. The funds were reportedly sent over the wires from overseas. Even the bank's president did not "have much experience with this sort of thing" and simply did not "see those kinds of funds go through the bank like that."[13] Earlier, in 1977, Rifʿat bought 2,000 dūnums or 500 acres in the Syrian village of Kfār Zbīn for 1.5 million Syrian pounds (about $150,000).[14] He also purchased at some point a residence in the Paris suburb of Saint Nom-la-Dreteche[15] and, according to an organ of the opposition, owned among other properties in London in 1988 a grand twenty-story building near Buckingham Palace.[16] Some of his Syrian critics put his net worth in the middle 1980s at more than $100 million, others at far higher amounts.[17]

If this is true, one question unavoidably arises: by what means did Rifʿat come to wallow in such wealth? In this connection many particulars passed in Damascus from mouth to mouth. Some, while illuminative, gained currency more by repetition than by evidence, or seemed unduly magnified. Others had the ring of truth. In a conversation with this writer, one merchant affirmed that with a view to helping his transactions forward, a Lebanese businessman of his acquaintance gave Rifʿat in the late 1970s a cadillac and $200,000. Others laid to Rifʿat's charge the taking of kickbacks on government contracts. He was also said to be a "silent partner" of several men of business, including Ṣā'ib an-Naḥḥās, a Shīʿī of humble origin from the Jorah district of Damascus who rose to exceptional wealth, was involved in the 1980s in the sale of arms to Iran, and is, among other things, the general manager of the Damascus affiliate of Digital Computers, the chairman of the Arab Syrian Company for the Development of Agricultural Products—a mixed private-state venture—and the agent of Peugeot, Volvo, Volkswagen, Interflug, and Scandinavian Air Lines. Even peasants from the Ḥawrān reproached Rifʿat with appropriating gold that retreating Ottomans, fearing capture, had buried east of Darʿā during the last phase of World War I and which was—as they contended—unearthed during excavations personally directed by him. For his part, the long-time opposition leader Akram al-Ḥūrānī linked Rifʿat to "the surreptitious sales" through Lebanon to dealers abroad of Syrian antiquities, including relics "looted from the Ḥamāh Museum" by his Defense Companies during their suppression of the Ḥamāh uprising of 1982 when, under Administrative Law No. 184, Rifʿat had it all his own way as the city's martial law governor.

Ḥūrānī could not help comparing the ease with which members of Asad's family and some of his closest aides accumulated wealth and the lavish lives they live with conditions in 1954–1957, when he was the head of the Budget Committee in the Chamber of Deputies. He still remembered how the then President Shukrī al-Quwatlī showed up one day at a session of the committee and personally pleaded with its members to allocate 18,000 Syrian pounds (about $5,028) for the purchase of a new presidential car. His old vehicle, he urged, was in bad shape and recurrently broke down. But led by Ḥūrānī, who thought that the amount could better be spent on providing an indigent village with an artesian well, the committee rejected Quwatlī's plea.[18]

Rifʿat himself was miffed by the stories circulating about him in commercial circles and by the opprobrium thrown on his name. "Why," he asked in a pre-1984 tête-à-tête with one of his friends, "are excuses advanced on behalf of the merchant when he enters upon an enterprise or undertakes a project . . . while when others engage in such endeavors, they are reviled and defamed?"[19] At another point in his account, his friend—who, by the way, had served in the Defense Companies—suggested that Rifʿat's detractors charged him with "smuggling narcotics, selling arms, killing the innocents, abducting women, and maintaining suspicious relations with [Syria's] enemies." From their standpoint, he added, the conduct of the Defense Companies constituted their "great proof." While seemingly questioning many of their accusations, he conceded that "in [some] segments of these companies one cannot but wonder: ʿwhere am I? In a military unit or a market?' "[20]

Rifʿat had been an embarrassment to his brother even before Asad's assumption of the reins of government. This is clear from remarks Asad made in November 1970—a few days before his coup d'état—at an extraordinary session of the Tenth Baʿth National Congress in which partisans of his rival Ṣalāḥ Jadīd had the upper hand. After emphasizing that he was "an old and disciplined member of the party" and "bound by its rules," Asad added: "Did you call for an investigation of my brother's conduct and did I object? Did you impose a punishment on him and did I refuse to carry it out?"[21] There was no hint in the summarized version of the proceedings as to the nature of the improprieties in which Rifʿat had been involved, but it would appear that Asad's observations related in part to unauthorized archaeological excavations undertaken at Rifʿat's initiative on the property of the Ḥasībīs, the in-laws of the then President Nūr-ud-Dīn al-Atāsī.[22]

The "Succession Crisis"

Rifʿat was also at the root of the trouble that distracted the regime during the 1983–1984 "succession crisis" set off by Asad's grave illness. On November 13, 1983 he had hurried to his brother's bedside as soon as word reached him of the latter's decline in health, and lost no opportunity to meet with the chief figures of the regime "individually or in groups" as they came to the hospital to express their solicitude for the president's condition. According to an account attributed to ʿAlī Ḥaydar, the commander of the Special Forces, Rifʿat came straight to the matter nearest his heart. "We no longer," he is quoted to have said with pain in his voice,

> have hope that my brother will pull through. . . . Even if he escapes death this time, he will not be able to conduct the affairs of state. . . . The disease from which he suffers is vicious and incurable. He was stricken by it a long time ago. That it racked him severely was kept secret except from myself and some members of the family. While we may with deep sorrow remain on the watch for what will become of him, it is impermissible that we should be heedless of our fate and the fate of the

> people and the country. Enemies lie in wait for us at home and abroad. . . . Why don't we use our meetings here to deliberate on who will succeed him? . . . I do not believe that you will prefer another man to me. My candidacy to step into his shoes is of long standing. . . . Of this you are aware. You used to confide it to me under your breath and took no precautions to spread it among friends and intimates. The hour has now come. Be, therefore, with me and I will be with you on a well-marked path toward well-defined aims. It may please you . . . that I met with the American ambassador more than once. . . . We agreed to plan together the course that we would steer. . . . He conveyed to me a commitment by the United States to stand by us. . . . I in turn promised him that we would act . . . at the earliest time you deem convenient. Perhaps today or tomorrow would be most opportune . . . for taking the first step toward . . . a new order of things that would, in my view, hold out brighter prospects . . . and bring the country greater good.[23]

It is difficult to determine whether Rifʿat was faithfully quoted or liberties were taken with his actual words or the real facts. That Rifʿat took the feeling of the American ambassador appears to be borne out by a 1984 press report that in "private conversations" with western diplomats Rifʿat "hinted that he was unhappy with Syria's ties to the Soviet Union and would be interested in reorienting Syrian policy toward the West if he were to succeed his brother as president."[24] It was not possible to verify that the U.S. government committed itself to back him up; however, it is significant that in its issue of February 6, 1984, *Business Week* maintained that "the United States is working overtime to forge stronger ties with Syria's 'first brother.' "

At any rate, in November 1983, Rifʿat is said to have pressed the personalities in Asad's inner circle time and again for an early response to his overture and to have been—to use the words ascribed to the commander of the Special Forces—"abominably lavish" in his promises of riches to those who would lend him support.

It is not clear what happened next, but it is doubtful that any of the generals who mattered showed willingness to give Rifʿat a free hand or lay at his feet the keys of the state. In their eyes he did not have the needed qualities or stature to inherit his brother's authority. He was too controversial a figure and, as already noted, vulnerable to charges of corruption. There was also a strong feeling of ill-will in the society at large against his 50,000-strong Defense Companies. They were viewed as lacking discipline, indifferent to human life, and beyond the restraints of the law. The regular army itself was resentful of the special status they enjoyed: until 1983 they were the only major military force permitted in Damascus or near the access routes to the capital, had their own investigative and intelligence units, ran their own prisons, had prior claims or easier access to advanced technology and sophisticated weapons and were, to crown it all, free from the control and financial supervision of the military establishment and unduly favored in emoluments and perquisites. When, at a meeting of the Union of Journalists and Men of Letters held on October 9, 1979, which Asad had countenanced with a view to taking the pulse of the

people, the ʿAlawī poet Mamdūḥ ʿUdwān wondered "why is the pay of the soldier in the Defense Companies higher than that of the officer in the regular forces?" he was giving vent to a widely shared feeling among the soldiery.[25] To many a high-ranking officer Rifʿat's accession to paramount power could only have meant a free charter to misrule. Nor did they approve of the turn in foreign policy he sought to make.

As the days sped and there was no sign of a favorable response from any of the regime's principal military figures, Rifʿat decided to advance in his own way the aim that he had in view. In the latter part of November 1983, at a word from him, men from the Defense Companies began setting up placards bearing his portrait on walls in various parts of the capital. Republican Guardsmen and agents of the internal security services soon intervened, pulling the placards down or covering them up with portraits of the president. But Rifʿat's men reappeared and did the same thing over again. This "war of posters"—to use the label that Damascenes fastened on it—went on for more than a week and ceased only when Asad began to recover his strength, but not before giving umbrage to close members of his family who could not forbear to express their indignation at such an unworthy public display by Rifʿat while his brother lay helpless and in pain.[26]

The tensions within the power structure now subsided, but not for long. They were stirred up anew by an army assignment list that transferred or removed Rifʿat loyalists from positions of real responsibility. Such a list could not have been issued without Asad's approval, and was interpreted as a first step in a conscious attempt to cut his brother down to size. It almost led to a clash in Damascus on February 27, 1984, between the Defense Companies and elements of the Republican Guard, but the conflict was temporarily eased by the appointment of Rifʿat on March 11 as one of three vice presidents. It soon became clear, however, that this was no more than a subtle endeavor by Asad to whittle away further his brother's power. For one thing, his new responsibilities were not defined. For another, an Asad loyalist was appointed to the command of the Defense Companies.

What Rifʿat did next seems, in retrospect, to have been reckless. Back in 1973 his mother had pleaded with him to keep away from the limelight and "appear on the scene only under the standard of your brother." He had sworn to her that he would "remain a ring in his finger" and would "in the manner of Solomon's ring, act only as he directs."[27] But he now broke his oath and played for his own hand. He compelled Asad's appointee to relinquish the command of the Defense Companies, turning it over to his own son-in-law, and on the night of March 30 ordered the armored units he could muster to seal off all access roads to Damascus and advance on the capital in full force.

According to Rifʿat's chronicler, what followed was thus recounted by a key player in Asad's entourage, whom he does not identify but who believed that it was Rifʿat's "folly, rashness, and vanity" that brought him in arms against his brother, and that "Rifʿat in himself amounts to nothing . . . and we all are, like him, of no account and have no weight and are what we are by the favor of the Lieutenant General"[28]

> At 2:00 A.M. my telephone rang. . . . General Ḥāfiz was on the other end. . . . "You might or might not see me after to-night," he said in a shaking voice. . . . "If the die is cast," he went on, "and things shape the course [Rifʿat] seeks, I beseech you and your comrades in God's name to keep faith with me. Tell them that it is my desire that you should all fight to the bitter end rather than allow the country to go to ruin before your eyes. . . . The matter is very serious. . . . It is a conspiracy that he has been hatching for quite a while . . . and with the most ignoble and wicked of men. . . . His emissary has just left me. . . . He urged me and pleaded with me to do Rifʿat's bidding, turn over to him the keys of the country, . . . and leave to Switzerland or any place of my choice with my family and the attendants and the guards I may wish to accompany me. If I refuse to submit to Rifʿat's will this very night, he warned that he will resort to the other language, that of the lightning strike and destructive force. . . . I do not now feel safe from the hazard of an attack or betrayal by him in the coming few moments.[29]

Assuming that the chronicler did not break away from solid fact, the unnamed key player, who in all probability was either Shafīq Fayyāḍ, the commander of the Third Armored Division and a cousin of Asad, or ʿAlī Aṣlān, the first deputy chief of staff, immediately called his orderlies and rapped out instructions for the summoning of the commanders of brigades within reach. After placing the units in a state of alert, he hurriedly joined Asad. Loyal troops within Damascus were then said to have been reinforced "in a cunning way." Simultaneously, other units moved to "encircle" the elements of the Defense Companies that had taken up positions outside the capital.[30]

Earlier that morning ʿAlī Ḥaydar, the commander of the Special Forces, had been—as he himself is said to have disclosed—urgently summoned to army headquarters and confronted with a claim by Rifʿat that he, ʿAlī Ḥaydar, was his ally and "in cahoots" with him. "This allegation," he protested, "is devoid of truth." He was then asked to telephone Rifʿat "and give him the lie in our presence." On being reached by Ḥaydar, Rifʿat said: "I hope you are still intent on honoring your pledged word to stand by me in this hour to which we all have been looking forward." "Where and when," ʿAlī Ḥaydar cut in, "did I make this pledge? How dare you utter such a slander?" Fuming, Rifʿat called him names. "By now playing me false and turning against me," he added, "you bare your true nature." ʿAlī Ḥaydar gave him back affront for affront. "I recognize," he went on, "no leader in this country other than Ḥāfiz al-Asad. He is my benefactor. . . . What I have of power and prestige I owe to him. I am a soldier in his service and a slave at his beck and call. While I am alive I bear obedience to him and will not fall away from him." On this note the high-wrought colloquy ended.[31]

Rifʿat's chronicler suggested that ʿAli Ḥaydar had been playing a double game. "It is not improbable," he wrote, "that he had woven threads with Rifʿat . . . without exposing his subservience to Ḥāfiz al-Asad to any doubt . . . either because he thought it likely that Rifʿat would score a victory over his brother . . . or aspired at securing new prestige in a new post if Rifʿat triumphed."[32] Anyhow, at that pivotal moment in the succession crisis ʿAlī Ḥaydar cast in his lot with the president and thus assisted in bringing Rifʿat to bay.

In the end Asad decided to deal with his brother personally. Repairing to his place of abode, he is said to have castigated him in these words:

> I am out of all patience with you. I can bear no more from you than I already endured. . . . Did you forget that it was I who nurtured you, trained you, led you by the hand to the comforts of life . . . , removed obstacles from your path, saved you from accusations and punishments, and made you my associate in power? . . . You repaid me with ingratitude and by conspiring against me and moving in the darkness of night to pull me down. . . . You no longer have any choice. Your fate is now in my hands. . . . If you do not abide by what I tell you and comply with my orders, I will send you to your death and will have dirges sung over you.[33]

Rifʿat yielded resignedly to his brother. He could not, in any case, have kept to his course. He had been as one walking along a sword-edge. By now the dice were also heavily loaded against him.

It is not possible to vouch for the strict accuracy of the version of the succession crisis given in these pages, if only because of the secretive nature of the politics within Syria's top leadership and the difficulties of securing trustworthy data on the alignments and internal discourse of the regime's central figures.[34]

It would be pointless to dwell at length upon the sequel. It is well known that Rifʿat was stripped of authority and sent abroad to live for a time in exile, being allowed only a few short visits to Syria. Eventually, however, he was given leave to resettle in Damascus, but was excluded from any active role. At the same time, his Defense Companies were thinned down from 50,000 to the size of a regular division—roughly between 15,000 and 20,000 men—and shorn of their privileges, their emoluments being reduced to the normal level. They were also deprived of their special intelligence branch and some of their airborne and missile units, and incorporated into the armed forces. Their command passed to Brigadier General Ḥikmat Ibrahīm, allegedly the husband of Asad's maternal aunt.[35] In these moves against Rifʿat, Asad was apparently abetted by the sages of the ʿAlawī community who, as rumors current then in Damascus had it, perceived Rifʿat as a threat to the survival of the regime as a whole.

The Republican Guard, which since its organization in 1979 had mainly concerned itself with Asad's personal safety, was now markedly strengthened and charged with many of the tasks for which the Defense Companies had been responsible. It became in effect the linch pin of the regime's security system in the Damascus area. ʿAdnān Makhlūf, one of Asad's confidants and a cousin of his wife, remained its commander and was before long promoted to major general. The president's eldest son Bāsil, though merely a major, came from about 1987 to wield palpable authority within the built-up unit in his new capacity as chief of Presidential Security and, after his death in a car crash in 1994, the ground was prepared for Bashshār, a younger son of Asad, to take over his brother's role. In the last few years of Bāsil's life there was a widely held view that he was being groomed to succeed his father, and that the Republican Guard was to serve as his primary power base. More recently the same thing was said with regard to Bashshār.

Indicative of the growing significance of the Republican Guard within Asad's power structure is an assertion by knowledgeable Syrians that this unit absorbs much of the revenue from the oil fields of the Dayr-az-Zūr region—which, incidentally, is in large part not recorded in the country's budget.

It should be added that in June 1995 Major General ʿAli Maḥmūd Ḥasan succeeded ʿAdnān Makhlūf as Commander of the Republic Guard. ʿAlī Maḥmūd Ḥasan, who is in his mid-fifties and of rural ʿAlawī background, is considered to be a highly professional officer. The reason for the change in the command of the Republican Guard could not be ascertained. But ʿAdnān Makhlūf remains an influential figure in Syria's regime.

New Tensions

Tensions within the power structure recurred. They evolved, to a degree, out of Asad's policy of maintaining a state of equilibrium among the regime's central figures. This had been from the outset a first principle of his statecraft. On the whole he had put it into effect with consummate skill. But between 1978 and 1983 he had let his brother Rifʿat slip his leash, thus unwittingly smoothing the way for the body politic to be temporarily thrown out of balance in 1984. He now sought to breathe new vigor into his old policy by pursuing it more consistently and dividing authority among his principal aides in such a manner as to preclude the possibility of another threat to his personal power. The increase in the strength of the reshaped Republican Guard and the salient role within its cadre and in the program of the future "officers-leaders," given at first to Asad's eldest son Bāsil and then to his younger son Bashshār, form essential elements of this policy. At the same time, it is not difficult to understand why, in consequence of the sustained play at counterpoising potential rivals, some of the regime's chief figures could not resist the feeling that they had been virtually reduced to mere pawns on Asad's power chessboard.

In similar manner appear to have been affected at least ʿAlī Ḥaydar, the commander of the Special Forces, a division of 8,000 to 15,000 commandos centered at al-Quṭayfeh, twenty-five or so miles northeast of Damascus, but with units posted since the middle 1980s around Bḥamdūn and Tripoli in Lebanon as well as in the neighborhood of the Syrian port of Ṭarṭūs and in Jabal Qasyūn, a mountain overlooking the capital. At a 1994 meeting of senior army officers attended by Chief of Staff Ḥikmat al-Shihābī, in a comment on Syria's involvement in the peace process and Asad's open commitment to achieve "normal" relations with Israel conditionally upon the full withdrawal of its forces from the Golan Heights,[36] ʿAlī Ḥaydar is said on good authority to have blurted out: "We have become nonentities. We were not even consulted." This imprudence and the attendant wrangle between him and Shihābī must have given offense to Asad when word of what happened reached him, and may have provided one of the causes for ʿAlī Ḥaydar's arrest in the summer of that year

and his replacement in the command of the Special Forces by the ʿAlawite Major General ʿAlī Ḥabīb.[37]

But in his fall from favor other factors may also have been at play. He reportedly raised doubts about the propriety in Syria of a transfer of power by lineal descent. But he did this cautiously and in muffled tones when Asad moved his son Bāsil into the limelight, and thus avoided giving Asad a handle against him. However, he was more forward in his criticism when, in the wake of Bāsil's death, attention shifted to Bashshār. As the story goes, he in effect said that the mantle of Asad does not fit Bashshār and that Syria is not a hereditary kingship. It is very likely that such views reflected a strong inclination among the military; at least it is doubtful that the bulk of the politically conscious Syrians can easily be reconciled to the notion of dynastic power. At any rate, by relieving ʿAlī Ḥaydar of his post, Asad signaled to his principal aides that they would play his way or would not play at all.

After ʿAlī Ḥaydar's arrest, a leaflet is said to have been circulated in Damascus by agents of one of the security bureaus alleging that he had $51 million stashed away in foreign bank accounts. If the reference to such a leaflet owes nothing to invention, the motive behind passing it around, quite apart from the truth or untruth of its content, was obviously to bring ʿAlī Ḥaydar into disrepute.[38]

One other development bears attention. On February 8, 1998, Asad issued an edict dismissing his brother Rifʿat as vice president. As already noted, Rifʿat held this post only nominally and the two brothers had been in disaccord since 1984. The new edict appears to have been prompted by the recent activities of Ṣawmar, one of Rifʿat's sons who, presumably under his father's direction, launched an opposition group in Paris, the Arab People's party. Through *ash-Shaʿb* (the People), a newspaper that he published also in the French capital, and a television station, the ANN (the Arab News Network), which he established in London, Ṣawmar was highly critical of Syria's regime. This naturally displeased Asad, who reportedly asked Rifʿat to put an end to his son's activities. But Rifʿat remained intransigent and allowed his son to keep to his course.

A Word on the Security and Intelligence Networks and Their Key Figures

Scarcely a month after their coup of February 1966, the Baʿthists loyal to General Ṣalāḥ Jadīd condemned at an extraordinary session of their regional congress "the conduct of some of the security organs" during "the past period" and sharply criticized "their numerousness," their "squandering of the money of the people," their "assault on freedoms," and the rise of their personnel "by illicit means" to "a class with special privileges."[39]

This criticism was voiced more than four years before Asad's ascent to the pinnacle of power, and suggests that in some respects his security networks are akin to their forerunners. However, under Asad they became—more palpably

than at any point since Syria's independence—sheer instruments of the ruler, with their forces harnessed to his needs and their chiefs ultimately accountable to him alone. Crises added to their numerical weight and expanded the range, forms, and intensity of their activities, freeing them from restraint and enhancing their power to curb, harass, or suppress political opponents, as during the 1976–1982 clandestine campaign against the regime by Muslim militants. In posthumously published observations made prior to his assassination in 1977, the Druze leader of the Lebanese National Movement Kamāl Junblāṭ described Syria in that year as "a big prison in which pullulate the agents of the secret police (they have attained, according to some reports, the extravagant number of 49,000)."[40] This figure is, in all probability, inflated. But even if the secret police is assumed to have been in 1977 only one-half or one-third as strong, the number would still be, for a small country like Syria, flagrantly excessive. For purposes of comparison, in the United States, which had at the time a population twenty-eight times as large as that of Syria (220 millions in one, 7.8 millions in the other), the total "work force" of the Federal Bureau of Investigations came to only 17,345 in 1970.[41]

It is necessary to emphasize that in the earlier period of Asad's rule, that of 1970–1975, when the course he steered was in high favor, the ranks of the secret police were much thinner, the hand of its investigative agents much lighter, and the watch they kept over citizens more benign. Similarly, in the period after the regime surmounted its internal crises, that is, from 1986 onward, its security networks became increasingly less overbearing or obtrusive in their behavior and more subtle and circumspect in their methods. "No person," affirmed Asad in 1995, "can now be arrested except by the [civil] police that turns him over to a court of justice."[42] But few Syrians accept this statement without some reserve.

Since the early 1980s or so, the security services have also become more efficient. One contributory factor is that the information they collect is now processed, stored, and retrieved electronically. This is also true in the case of the data gathered by the organs of Military Intelligence and Air Force Intelligence. By contrast, the institutions of the Baʿth party remain uncomputerized. As late as 1985 its Eighth Regional Congress listed among the obstacles hindering its progress "the absence of advanced technical means—such as computers—in the sphere of party activities."[43] It still suffers from a sense of technological inadequacy. From this, it may be justifiably inferred that in the eyes of Asad it does not enjoy the priority that he attaches to the apparatuses of security and intelligence.

Apart from the intelligence units incorporated in the politically relevant military formations, there are today altogether, as far as could be ascertained, four major security and intelligence networks, namely, Political Security, General Intelligence, Military Intelligence, and Air Force Intelligence. All answer ultimately to the Presidential Intelligence Committee. The primary task of Political Security is to detect any sign of organized dissidence or of tendencies, if only in speech, prejudicial to the interests of the regime. General Intelligence is made

up of three branches, that of Palestine, that of Internal Security (the equivalent of the F.B.I.), and that of External Security (the equivalent of the C.I.A.). There is much overlap in the functions of Internal Security with those of Political Security. In bringing into play these two parallel secret forces and thus ensuring that he has always in the security field two strings to his bow, Asad was acting in a manner not unlike that of Napoleon, who pressed into his service a secret police under Fouché and simultaneously organized a counterpolice to check on Fouché.[44] Naturally enough, the agents of Asad's Internal Security and those of his Political Security are unknown to one another, to the point that in the early 1980s some of their elements are said to have exchanged fire, each apparently thinking that the other consisted of Muslim militants. As to Military Intelligence and Air Force Intelligence, tales that had made their way through the opposition's rumor mill contend that the sharp edge of these two networks is turned against potential dissidence within the armed forces rather than against enemies abroad. But it must be kept in mind that all the security and intelligence establishments operate in intense secrecy, and reports about them are seldom based on definite knowledge.

The key intelligence and security figures under Asad have been ʿAli Dūbā, Muḥammad al-Khūlī, and Muḥammad Naṣīf. They all now hold the rank of major general and all are ʿAlawites (Table 18–1).

ʿAlī Dūbā has had a 24-year run as chief of military intelligence: he has held the post since 1974. Significantly, in the same period Asad changed his prime minister five times.[45] Though recently "promoted," according to one report, to advisor to the president on military intelligence or, as another account has it, to deputy chief of staff for security affairs, ʿAlī Dūbā appears to be still in control of the military intelligence corps.

Born in 1933 to a religious shaykh and a small landowner from the Numaylatiyyah clan of al-Matāwirah tribe, he descends from a family that numbers in the thousands, all bearing the surname of Dūbā.[46] Some of them are, like him, natives of Qurfayṣ, a village in the district of Jableh, but others are indigenous to Alexandretta and still others to Jisr-ush-Shughūr, fifty-three miles northeast of Latakia.[47] The family gained in prestige among montane ʿAlawīs by dint of the "martyrdom" in 1921 of one of its members, Muḥammad Asʿad Dūbā, in a fierce battle against the French led by Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī, a popular man of religion and a chief of the Bashārghah clan of al-Matāwirah tribe.

More relevant as a factor in ʿAlī Dūbā's initial ascent in the military intelligence corps is his membership in the Baʿth party since the 1950s, that is, since his days at the Latakia Holy Land Secondary School. But his durability in power is in essence explicable by the decision he took in 1970 to link his fate to that of Asad, and by the fact that at no subsequent point did he break faith with him.

Some reports insist that over the years Dūbā built a following or a bloc of his own. For example, it is said that General ʿAdnān Badr Ḥasan, the chief of political security since 1987, and Mājīd Saʿīd, the chief of general intelligence from 1987 to 1994 (Table 18–1), are Dūbā's allies, that Colonel Muḥsin Sal-

mān, the commander of the Thirty-fifth Commando Regiment of the Special Forces, is his nephew, and that General ʿAlī Ḥabīb, the commander of the Special Forces since 1994, is a fellow tribesman. If true, this can be interpreted as no more than a reflection of Asad's policy of allowing his principal aides to gather strength, but only up to the point that would enable him to continue to hold the scales between them and avoid setting his paramount power at hazard.

Conducive to the efficacy of this policy in the particular instance of ʿAlī Dūbā are several factors. One is his unpopularity among the military officers in general, which has its roots in the tendency of his apparatus to reach into many aspects of their lives. At the same time, there is in their higher ranks not only fear but also jealousy of his authority, seeing that, as an Arab saying goes and as an ʿAlawite opponent of the regime put it, "the dog of the emīr is an emīr."[48] Moreover, tales that are abroad contend that ʿAlī Dūbā has succumbed to corruption, that he has "a lot of fingers in a lot of Lebanese pies," and that he is "a silent partner" of Mundhir al-Kassār, a Sunnī from an-Nabak, a husband of a sister of ʿAlī Dūbā's wife, a former contractor and in the 1980s and 1990s allegedly "one of the kings of drug trafficking." Such contentions, if true, cannot but weaken Dūbā's standing and strengthen Asad's hold on him. But it is necessary to reiterate that it is very difficult to tear away the veil of secrecy that covers the intelligence and security organs and their chiefs, and that a scholar must pick his way with caution amid the pitfalls of hearsay evidence.

Unlike ʿAlī Dūbā, Muḥammad al-Khūlī, for long Asad's leading intelligence advisor, has never been the mark for accusations, even by the enemies of the regime, in any matter involving abuse of authority with a view to personal enrichment. One hears no ill of him except that he may have had a part in influencing Asad toward an undue reliance on members of his own sect. Otherwise he is depicted as upright, competent, deep in Asad's confidence, and unwavering in his loyalty to him. He is also known to be a man of few words and to keep to the background, shunning publicity. Elements of the opposition hold a similar view of him. "Muḥammad al-Khūlī," remarked in 1988 a vocal opponent of the regime and a former secretary general of the Baʿth party, "is among the most discerning of the men around Asad. He is clever and cultured. It is possible that it was he who pushed Asad toward the slippery path of sectarianism. But he is a man with a horizon. I know him personally and know also that his is a nature that is complex."[49]

Muḥammad al-Khūlī descends from the tribe of al-Ḥaddādīn and from a family that historically belonged to a class of intermediaries between the peasants and the absentee landowners. The members of this class were called in some parts of the ʿAlawī country "al-khūlīs" and in the coastal region "shūbāṣīs." As a rule, they functioned as agents of the landowners. Their main task was to watch over the peasants, particularly during the season for reaping and gathering in of the produce. A field study sponsored by the Peasants' General Union depicted the khūlī or shūbāṣī in the preagrarian reform period as "the epitome of force, injustice, intimidation, and high-handedness in the eyes of the peasants."[50] This generalization may not necessarily be true of the forefathers of

Muḥammad al-Khūlī, of course. In any case, according to an ʿAlawite source, his nearest male ancestor, that is his father, was not by occupation a khūlī but a religious shaykh.

Little is known about the early life of Muḥammad al-Khūlī, except that he was born in 1937 at Bayt Yāshūt, a village in the district of Jableh. In his youth he showed no interest in the ideas of the Baʿthists, and in fact had no connection whatever with the party prior to his sudden appearance in the arena of power in 1970 on Asad's seizure of the reins of government. It is not clear when the first link between him and Asad was forged. But it is beyond question that he owes his prominence primarily to his close ties with Asad. On the latter's assumption of the command of the air force in 1964, al-Khūlī was appointed deputy chief and, in 1970, chief of air intelligence; and, not long afterwards, he was made chairman of the Presidential Intelligence Committee, which represented something in the nature of a supreme intelligence staff and played a key role in selecting many of the leaders of the intelligence networks and keeping a close surveillance on their undercover activities.

Al-Khūlī retained his intelligence posts until October 31, 1987, when, for larger reasons of policy and as a consequence of the controversial Hindāwī incident of April 1986 at London's Heathrow airport and the ensuing severance by Britain of its diplomatic relations with Syria, it became necessary to convey the impression that he had fallen out of favor. The Ḥindāwī incident is still open to different interpretations. One view regards it as a clumsy attempt by Syria's Air Intelligence to bomb an Israeli El Al jet in retaliation for the mistreatment of a Syrian delegation on board a Libyan jet flying from Tripoli to Damascus that Israeli fighters had forced down earlier in February. Another interpretation is inclined to suspect that Nidhār Hindāwī was a double agent and a tool in the crafty hands of Mossad, and that Syria's Air Intelligence had fallen into a trap that the Israelis had sprung, their ulterior object being, as the French Premier Jacques Chirac put it, "to embarrass Syria and destabilize the Asad regime."[51] It is still not possible to shed light on the precise role, if any, of Asad or al-Khūlī in the whole affair. But it is not unlikely that al-Khūlī decided to take ultimate responsibility for imprudence or missteps by Air Intelligence and to consent to the semblance of presidential disfavor in the higher interest of the regime.

Despite his formal demotion in 1987 to deputy commander of the air force—a post he would hold till 1994—al-Khūlī continued to stand high with Asad and reportedly exercised all along and still exercises much influence as his intelligence advisor. Since 1994 he has been also de facto commander of the air force. Moreover, Ibrahīm Ḥwayjah, the chief of air intelligence since 1987, is, as Syrians put it, "al-Khūlī's creature" and descends, like al-Khūlī, from the tribe of al-Ḥaddādīn.[52]

As could be imagined, of Asad's principal aides the least open to public scrutiny is Muḥammad Naṣīf, the chief of internal security, which comes to the same thing as the secret police. Little of political import escapes his eyes. He is depicted by opponents of the regime who came in contact with him as a man

who is "smooth and slick" and "shows outwardly other than which he harbors inwardly" or "ingratiates himself with you only to stab you in the back." They also affirm that when it comes to methods of investigation or forms of punishment for political offenders, no scruple would weigh with him. In other words, he appears to have all the qualities for the part for which Asad had tapped him.

It is not known when the lines of their lives first crossed. He descends, like Asad, from the Kalbiyyah tribe. This may or may not have formed a bond between them, being as he is from a different subclan and from a different part of the ʿAlawī country. He is also about nine years younger than Asad. Born around 1939 in al-Laqbeh, a village near Maṣyāf, to a lesser rural notable who, according to a Syrian journalist with wide contacts, "lived on aṭāwas," that is, on exactions, Muḥammad Naṣīf joined the army on finishing school and was only a noncommissioned officer in 1963 on the advent of the Baʿthists to power. Not long afterward, close upon his twenty-fifth year, he was entrusted with the section of Internal Security that had the charge of tapping telephones. At the time the secret Military Committee, which included Asad in its inner core, called the shots.[53] Naṣīf proved so equal to his task that in the mid-seventies Asad, now unrivaled in authority, picked him to run the Internal Security Branch of General Intelligence. Since then, despite a recent operation on his heart, he has been Asad's chief instrument in tracking the regime's domestic enemies. Formally he comes under the chief of General Intelligence, but none of the five Sunnīs who held this post during his tenure of office had as much weight or stood as high in Asad's confidence as Muḥammad Naṣīf.[54] He overshadowed them all and, unlike them, enjoyed and still enjoys unhindered access to Asad.

Naṣīf did not, it would appear, escape the temptation of using his influence to build a personal fortune. He is often identified as one of the silent partners of the nouveau riche Ṣāʾib an-Naḥḥās, with whom he reportedly trades favors and who is said to have opened a bank account for him in West Berlin as far back as the 1970s.[55] A prominent Damascene merchant put it somewhat differently: "Ṣāʾib an-Naḥḥās," he said, "belongs to a class of merchants who are of the breed of Internal Security and its chief Muḥammad Naṣīf."[56] These are things that are here merely recounted, but for which it is not possible to vouch.

One puzzling question remains: why has Asad, whose own rectitude in money matters is beyond dispute, tolerated abuses among so many of his key aides, and not demanded a stricter accounting from them? One explanation given by Syrians is that by resorting to improper practices the aides in question weaken themselves, which renders them more pliant to Asad's will. Others say they constitute his power base, which he cannot be expected to shoot in the foot. But the blind eye that he turns to corruption in his entourage has eroded some of his stature and has added to the cynicism that many Syrians feel about his regime.

CHAPTER 19

A Glance at the Third Level of Power or at the Composition of the Upper Elite of the Baʿth Party (1970–1997)

One salient feature of the party's central leadership in this period had been its relatively high degree of stability. Whereas between 1963 and 1970 the Baʿth Regional Command went through four major shakeups, its members' tenure became, after Asad's capture of power and the weeding out of factions, more predictable and regularized. Conformably to the party's needs or Asad's purposes, however, the party's leading body received infusions of fresh blood at every Baʿth regional congress held since 1970. Some of its members also lost favor and, therefore, their command seat, either by reason of poor performance or—as in the wake of "the succession crisis" of 1983–1984—because of conduct prejudicial to Asad's interests. Moreover, a 1985 rule segregated the party apparatus from the cabinet and barred all ministers, except the premier and the minister of defense, from membership in the top party command. Even so, there has been a pronounced trend toward continuity in leadership: out of the twenty-one men currently constituting the party's highest stratum, five have been part of the Regional Command since 1985, ten since 1980, two since 1975 and four—Asad himself, Defense Minister Muṣṭafa Ṭlās, Vice President ʿAbd-ul-Ḥalīm Khaddām, and Assistant Secretary General ʿAbdallah al-Aḥmar—since the beginning of Asad's rule.[1]

Inevitably the difference in age between the leadership and the bulk of the party's rank and file has been widening: as is evident from Table 19–1, in 1990 no fewer than 87 percent of the party members were under forty-one years, while at least nineteen out of the twenty-one members of the Regional Command were in the age range forty-five to sixty.[2]

Accession to the command ostensibly depended until 1980 upon election by the delegates of the party congress, and since that year upon choice by vote of the members of the newly created Central Committee, but in fact appointment from above has been the norm. Incumbency rests in part upon ability to tackle practical problems and render the powers of the regime more effective, but unconditional fidelity to Asad is indispensable.

Unlike their counterparts of the 1950s and 1960s, who were often militants or enthusiasts, the members of the post-1970 party elite have tended to take on the traits of functionaries, except for the few who are Asad's personal trustees.

Another change in the makeup of the Regional Command under Asad has been the rise in the numerical weight of Sunnī Baʿthists. On the eve of his 1970 coup their proportion at that level was as low as 42.9 percent. Shortly after he

TABLE 19–1
Breakdown of Baʿth Party and Baʿth Regional Command Membership by Age Group, 1990

Age Group	*% of Party Members*	*% of Regional Command Members*	*Rough % of Total Population*
Birth–13 years	—	—	45.7
14–19	35.0	—	13.1
20–30	34.0	—	12.9
31–40	18.0	—	10.2
41–50	8.0	71.4	7.4
51–60	3.5	19.1	4.3
Above 60	1.5	—	6.4
No information	—	9.5	—
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources: The population percentages are rough estimates and based on figures in Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1990*, p. 60; the command membership percentages are based on data in the Appendix; and the party membership percentages were obtained from the Baʿth Regional Command headquarters, Damascus, in December 1992.

seized power it shot up to 78.9 percent. This is a share higher than they had in any of the Regional Commands of 1963–1970 (see Table 19–2) or the Baʿth Executive Bureau of 1945–1958 (see Tables 11–1 and 11–2). If it slipped markedly in 1975, it rose up again in 1980 and from that year onward has settled at 66.7 percent.

The high representation of Sunnīs at the party's leadership level in the early years of Asad's rule reflected his strong desire to gain the loyalty of the large Sunnī component of the officer corps and the goodwill of the majority of the country's population or, as the command he first thrust onto the political stage put it as early as 1970, to redress "the lack of balance between the party's social structure and the makeup of society" and bring to an end "the isolation of the party from the masses."[3] In this light the perceptible tilt in the distribution of command seats in 1975 in favor of ʿAlawīs and at the expense of Sunnīs is not easily explicable. It is unlikely that it was a purely fortuitous occurrence, but it would be going to far too suggest that it involved a shift away from the course toward national concord that Asad had marked out. However, it is interesting that it came on the heels of the consolidation of the regime's power and coincided with the rise in the influence of Asad's younger brother Rifʿat and his elevation to the party command. The reshuffle of the leadership in 1980 and the redress of the Sunnīs' numerical weight is understandable in the context of the regime's efforts to undercut the highly threatening Islamist forces by which it was then being buffeted. Subsequently, the shifts in the command have not been of much account, except for the loss by Rifʿat's close associates of their seats in 1985.[4]

TABLE 19–2
The Baʿth Regional Commands' Membership by Religion and Sect, 1963–1997
(percentage)

Religion or Sect	Approximate % of Syria's Population in 1943 If Bedouins[a] Excluded	Included	Sept. 1963 to Feb. 1964	Feb. 1964 to Apr. 1965	Apr. 1965 to Aug. 1965	Aug. 1965 to Dec. 1965[b]	Mar. 1966 to Sept. 1966
Sunnīs	68.9	72.7	50.0	50.0	58.4	62.5	46.6
ʿAlawīs	11.4	10.0	12.5	25.0	8.3	6.2	26.7
Druze	3.0	2.7	37.5	12.5	16.7	18.8	6.7
Ismāʿīlīs	1.0	0.9	—	12.5	8.3	12.5	13.3
Shīʿīs	0.4	0.4	—	—	—	—	—
Yazīdis	0.1	0.1	—	—	—	—	—
Jews	1.0	0.9	—	—	—	—	—
Greek Orthodox	4.8	4.2	—	—	8.3	—	6.7
Other Christians	9.4	8.1	—	—	—	—	—
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Based on Appendix.

[a]Bedouins are here classified as Sunnīs.

[b]This command was dissolved by the party's National Command on 19 December 1965. The next command was chosen after the coup of 23 February 1966.

A change concurrent with the enhanced role of Sunnīs has been the increased representation in the party's higher echelons of elements from urban, mercantile, or shopkeeping backgrounds. Out of the forty-eight individuals who ascended to membership in the Regional Command between 1970 and 1997, 27.1 percent came from the main cities and 18.7 percent from families engaged in commerce or trade. The corresponding figures for 1966–1970 were only 12.6 and 8.3 percent (Table 12–4). Again, whereas in the post-1970 period the proportion of native Damascenes in the top level of the party added up to 12.5 percent, none of the members of the 1966–1970 commands hailed from Syria's capital. These changes accorded with Asad's early realization of his regime's pressing need for an urban-rural entente.

The highest proportion of command seats in 1970–1997 (45.8 percent), however, was held by individuals of peasant extraction. Moreover, in terms of occupational status, schoolteachers formed the weightiest component (37.5 percent). Interestingly, the military officers' share declined from 34.5 percent in 1963 to 25 percent in 1966–1970 and 18.8 percent in 1970–1997.

But it is necessary not to lose sight of the fact that, from the standpoint of real power, the Regional Command has only a derivative significance. Whatever authority it enjoys it draws from Asad, who has been since 1970 its unrivaled driving force.

TABLE 19–2 (Continued)

Sept. 1966 to Oct. 1968	*Oct. 1968 to Mar. 1969*	*Mar. 1969 to Nov. 1970*	*Nov. 1970 to May 1971*	*May 1971 to Apr. 1975*	*Apr. 1975 to Jan. 1980*	*Jan. 1980 to Jan. 1985*	*Jan. 1985 to 1997*
53.3	46.7	42.9	78.9	71.4	57.1	66.7	66.7
20.0	26.7	28.6	21.1	19.0	33.3	19.0	19.0
6.7	13.2	14.3	—	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8
13.3	6.7	7.1	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6.7	6.7	7.1	—	4.8	4.8	9.5	9.5
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

TABLE 19–3
Composition of Baʿth Regional Commands, November 1970–1997
(Summary of Data in Appendix)

	Religion and Sect				
	No. of Members	*%*	*No of Individuals*[a]	*%*	*Approximate % of Syria's Population (Including Bedouins) in 1943*[b]
Sunnīs	65	67.0	32	66.7	72.7[b]
ʿAlawīs	22	22.7	10	20.8	10.0
Druze	4	4.1	2	4.2	2.7
Ismaʿīlīs					0.9
Shīʿis					0.4
Yazīdis					0.1
Jews					0.9
Greek Orthodox	6	6.2	4	8.3	4.2
Other Christians					8.1
Total	97	100.0	48	100.0	100.0

TABLE 19–3 (Continued)

Place of Birth

	No. of Members	*%*	*No. of Individuals*[a]	*%*	*% of Total Population* *1970*	*1981*
Villages	33	34.1	19	39.6	56.5	52.9
Provincial Towns	36	34.1	15	31.2	12.5	15.9
Main Cities[c]						
Damascus	15	15.5	6	12.5	13.3	12.3
Aleppo	4	4.1	2	4.2	10.1	10.9
Ḥimṣ	4	4.1	3	6.2	3.4	3.8
Ḥamāh	4	4.1	2	4.2	2.2	2.0
Latakia					2.0	2.2
No information	1	1.0	1	2.1		
Total	97	100.0	48	100.0	100.0	100.0

Education

	No. of Individuals[a]
College	45
Secondary	
Elementary	2
Religious	1
Total	48

Sex

	No. of Individuals[a]
Males	48
Female	
Total	48

Age in Year of First Accession to Command

	No. of Individuals[a]
No information	4
27–29 years	2
30–34 years	6
35–39 years	18
40–45 years	12
46–49 years	5
53 years	1
Total	48

Origins in Lesser Rural or Village Notability

	No. of Individuals[a]
Non-rurals	13
Individuals stemming from the lesser rural notability	10 (20.8%)
Others	25
Total	48

TABLE 19–3 (Continued)

Province of Birth	*No. of Individuals*[a]
City of Damascus	6
Rural Damascus	4
Aleppo	4
Ḥimṣ	6
Ḥamāh	2
Latakia	6
Dayr az-Zūr	4
Idlib	3
al-Ḥasakeh	
ar-Raqqah	
as-Suwaydā'	2
Darʿa	6
Ṭarṭūs	5
Qunayṭrah	
Total	48

Class Origin	*No. of Individuals*[a]		*%*
Classes of low income		4	8.3
Landless peasants	3		
Laborer	1		
Classes of lower middle income		27	56.3
Petty landed peasants	13		
Artisans	4		
Small trader	1		
Small landowners	2		
Petty landed religious shaykhs	2		
Petty officials	5		
Classes of middling income		12	25.0
Middling landed peasants	6		
Landed shopkeeper	1		
Middling landed merchants	2		
Middling merchant *ʿālim*	1		
Middling official	1		
Middle landowner	1		
Classes of upper middle income		5	10.4
Merchant	1		
Landowner	1		
Mercantile religious shaykhs	2		
Contractor	1		
Total		48	100.0

TABLE 19–3 (Continued)

Occupation	*No. of Individuals*[a]	*%*
Military Officers	9[d]	18.8
Civilians		
a. Members of Professions	34	70.8
Schoolteachers	18 (37.5%)	
College professors	5	
Lawyers	5	
Agronomists	2	
Physician	1	
Engineers	2	
Journalist	1	
b. Others	5	10.4
Workers	3[e]	
Judicial officer	1	
Insurance employee	1	
Total	48	100.0

[a]Individuals who were elected or appointed to the command for more than one term are counted only once in this column.

[b]See note b in Table 12–3.

[c]Cities with populations of more than 100,000 in 1970 and 1981.

[d]Including two exschoolteachers and a former customs official.

[e]Including two oil workers and one fabric mills weaver.

CHAPTER 20

Shifting the Focus to the Fourth Level of Power, or an Analysis, by Way of Illustration, of the Role of the Peasants' General Union, the Party's Principal Ancillary Mass Organization

Whereas in 1991 only one-sixth of the peasants belonged to the Baʿth party, no fewer than 83.7 percent of all Syrians active in agriculture, excluding employers, were, according to official sources, enrolled in peasant associations (see Table 20–1), which grew out of the merger in 1974 of the peasant unions and the agricultural cooperatives. The peasant unions had their beginnings in 1964 and received their impulse from the party itself. By contrast, the energizing force of the agricultural cooperatives, whose origins go back to 1943, came from educated peasant elements, at least until the 1958 Agrarian Reform Law and the related amendments enacted in 1963, which made adherence to cooperatives mandatory for all grantees of land.[1] After 1974, despite falterings and failed ventures and, in some instances, mere peasant acquiescence rather than active participation, peasant unionism grew apace and by 1992 covered 5,061 out of Syria's 6,468 villages.[2] The unaffected villages are of minor importance or have fewer than four hundred inhabitants and lie in border or semidesert districts and, by and large, in the more arid regions of the provinces of al-Ḥasakah, Aleppo, and ar-Raqqah.[3]

The buildup of a countrywide network of peasant associations was to some extent the result of pressure by the Baʿth party but also reflected a growing adaptability on the part of the peasants and an increasing awareness by them of the benefits of cooperative agriculture. Prior to the implementation of agrarian reform they had for long been starved for capital and had to rely for credit on unscrupulous merchants and moneylenders. As detailed in Chapter 3, by joining peasant associations, which are for the most part multipurpose service cooperatives, they have become favorably placed to secure loans in cash and kind on preferential terms and at interest rates below the cost of money. They also benefit from all the advantages that the associations enjoy: among other things, immunity from taxes and fees levied on means of production, a 5 percent rebate on supplies purchased from state institutions, a 25 percent reduction on the cost of transporting agricultural machines and equipment by railway or other public means, and appreciable discounts by dint of the Peasants' General Union's monopoly since 1977 over the distribution of spare parts for tractors and harvesters.[4] The peasants are undoubtedly better off as members of associations than if left to fend for themselves. Except in villages where well-to-do farmers

TABLE 20–1
Membership of Agricultural Cooperatives and/or Peasant Unions in 1960, 1972, 1975, 1984, 1991, and 1995

Year	*No. of Syrians Active in Agriculture, Excluding Employers*[a]	*No. of Agricultural Cooperatives*[b]	*No. of Members*	*% of Agriculturalists Incorporated*	*No. of Peasant Unions or Associations*[b]	*No. of Members*	*% of Agriculturalists Incorporated*
1960	474,147[a] [c]	277	14,793	3.1	—	—	—
1972	881,885[c]	1,645	117,101	13.0	2,783	196,007	22.2
1975	892,258[c] [d]	—[b]	—[b]	—	3,303	209,619	23.5
1984	521,707[c]	—	—	—	4,050	441,356[e]	84.6[e]
1991	792,992[c]	—	—	—	4,816	664,167	83.7
1995					5,132	801,230	

Sources: Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Census of Population in 1960*, pp. 162–63 and 166–67; Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Natāʾiju Baḥth-il-ʿAyyinah as-Sukkāniyya l-il-Quṭr-il-ʿArabi-l-Sūrī* (Results of the Study of the Poulation Sample for Manpower and the Labor Force) (Damascus, September 1972), Tables 19 and 20; Peasants General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm ar-Rābiʿ,* p. 28; *Niḍāl-ul-Fallāḥīn*, special documentary issue (Damascus, 1987), p. 104; Baʿth Regional Command, Peasants' Bureau, *History of the Agricultural Cooperative Movement in Syria . . .* (in Arabic) (Damascus, 1974), p. 121; Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1986*, pp. 106–7; *1991*, p. 90; *1992*, pp. 90 and 419; and *1996*, p. 452.

[a]Keep in mind that a great number of female family workers were not counted in 1960.

[b]The first agricultural cooperative—that of Dayr ʿAṭiyyah, a village 89 kilometers to the northeast of Damascus—was founded in 1943. The peasant unions came into being in 1964. The agricultural cooperatives and peasant unions were merged in 1974 and named peasant associations.

[c]Bear in mind that 1984 was a bad year and that 1972, 1975, and 1991 were good years for agriculture. Keep in view also that since 1989 there has been a "reverse migration" from the cities to the villages, whereas the 1980s were marked by a rural exodus.

[d]The total number of Syrians active in agriculture in 1975 was 918,108. Inasmuch as in the pertinent source this figure was not broken according to employment status, it was assumed for the purposes of this table that agricultural employers numbered as many as in 1972, that is, 25,850.

[e]It is obvious that because of the drought in 1984, some of the peasants members—including field laborers—did not engage in agriculture in that year. The actual percentage of agriculturalists incorporated is, therefore, lower than the one shown in the table.

or lesser rural notables pull the strings, the associations give voice to the grievances of the poorer peasants and agricultural laborers, help them with their problems, and work toward the improvement of their social and economic conditions. They also fulfill or coordinate on behalf of all incorporated peasants such functions as the selection and purchase of seed and fertilizers, the control of pests, the transport or storage of the produce, the marketing of the principal crops at equitable valuation, and the offering of expert advice, as by agronomists, who in Syria as a whole increased from 1,020 in 1970 to 5,685 in 1980, and 13,572 in 1991. But in 1970 scarcely any agronomist was attached to the peasant associations. By 1980 however, 23.2 percent and by 1991 about one-third of all agronomists formed part of these associations.[5]

To be sure, things have not been running as smoothly as the peasants or their General Union desire. As recently as March 1991, their leadership complained that there had been in the preceding five years "hurried leaps in the prices of the requisites of production and in the costs of agricultural development" which "hampered the carrying out of production plans . . . and the progress toward more scientific methods of cultivation." "Some government agencies," the leadership went on, "now and then take measures . . . that affect the core of the agricultural sector or of peasant life, without consulting the peasants' organization or discussing with it the attendant adverse effects." The leadership also referred to the defective performance of "certain agencies," adducing as examples, "the shortage of some production requisites . . . , the nonpayment on time of the value of the marketed crops, and the deficient supply of sacks or containers." By dint of these and other shortcomings, "the peasants developed an aversion to dealing with the agencies concerned, which produced something of a crisis of confidence that should have been averted." In the same complaint, the attention of the government was directed to "the great dangers to the acreage under cultivation involved in the haphazard march of cement, the pollution of the environment, the spread of salinity, and the unwise use of water."[6]

Finance has been less of a major problem for the peasants' organization in recent years than was the case in the initial phase of its life, when it depended entirely on the party or the state for the funding of its activities. In 1966 its whole revenue consisted of a subsidy of 717,958 Syrian pounds ($188,440) from the Baʿth Regional Command.[7] With respect to income its condition remained substantially unchanged for the rest of the 1960s. In subsequent decades, however, although not a few of its constituent units fared badly or found their equity shrinking due to such factors as lack of focus and poor management, or because of debt burdens incurred during drought years, the organization as a whole relied increasingly on its own resources. In 1976 grants-in-aid by the party leadership, the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs constituted only 39.1 percent of its total receipts of 17.4 million Syrian pounds ($4.4 million). The corresponding proportion was down to 7.9 percent in its 1985 budget of 122 million pounds ($31 million) but rose slightly to 9.4 percent in its 1990 budget of 201.2 million pounds ($17.8 million).[8]

Ironically, when the peasants' organization was utterly dependent for its income on the regime it enjoyed a relatively greater measure of freedom than when it gained in financial self-sufficiency. To its First Congress, which met in September 1965, the party had held out the promise that the organization would "operate on all levels in a free, independent, and democratic manner" and that its constituent associations "in every village" would be immune "from any government interference in their affairs."[9] Indeed, from 1964 to 1970 the leaders of the Peasants' General Union had it much their own way. This was facilitated by a number of factors: the loose ordering of the Baʿth regime of 1963–1966, the instability at its apex stemming from the factional strife within the Baʿth party, and the affinity of outlook between the leadership of the Peasants' General Union and that of the rural-based mainstream Baʿthists of the 1960s.

But the shock of the 1967 Arab military defeat generated pressures for coordinating the country's efforts and mobilizing its resources, including those of agriculture, and fostered the development of a more highly centralized system of decision making. By reason of the ensuing conflict between the civilian and military wings of the party, however, closer control over the peasants' organization was not achieved until after the seizure by Asad in 1970 of the helm of state. Its leaders, including Aḥmad Ḥamdūnī, the head of its Executive Committee, an unassuming man of peasant extraction from a village in the Ghāb valley, had sided in 1969 with the party's civilian branch against Asad,[10] who now swept them away, obliging the organization in 1971 to accept as its new chief the more accommodating Muṣṭafa al-ʿĀyed, a former shāwī or sheep-tending peasant from the semisedentary tribe of al-ʿAfādlah and a native of Slūk, a village to the northeast of ar-Raqqah.[11] Al-ʿĀyed has remained at the head of the Peasants' General Union to this day.

But if, under Asad, the grip of the regime over the peasants' organization has become firmer, by virtue of his background Asad has all along been susceptible to the opinions, needs, and grievances of its rank and file. Moreover, the only indispensable qualities he demands of its leaders are loyalty to his person and a general commitment to his policies and the country's economic plans. Otherwise, he allows them a considerable measure of independence of judgment on questions of relevance to agriculture and the life of their constituents.

In considering the mode in which the peasants have been involved in the relationships of power in Asad's period, it is useful to quote from a speech he delivered in April 1981 at the Fifth Congress of the Peasants' General Union. "Fellow peasants!" Asad said, "No hand will after this day be above your hand. . . . You are the producers. . . . Yours is the power. . . . To you belongs the decision in every matter relating to the land and the agricultural question. . . . Fellow peasants! You are present . . . in every local or central command, in all the basic institutions and committees, . . . in the local administration, in the People's Assembly, in the Supreme Planning Council, . . . in the highest party congress . . . and in every institution that has decision-making powers."[12]

Is Asad here tossing around phrases merely for effect? Or is there some substance in his words? Or, to be more concrete, do the peasants or their unions have a demonstrable influence over the policy-making process, at least in matters affecting them? It is beyond doubt that Asad allows the peasants' unions a voice in all issues of concern to their constituents and tolerates criticism of policies that have an adverse effect on agriculturists.

In this context the happenings in 1979 at ar-Rqayṭah, a small village in the province of Ḥamāh, offer a good illustration of the kind of influence that the peasant unions are capable of exerting. In that year, the state appropriated some of ar-Rqayṭah's lands to meet the needs of a contemplated industrial project. The local peasants viewed the measure as prejudicial to their interests and persuaded their association to espouse their cause. Eventually, through their General Union, the matter came to the attention of Asad who, after considering the other side of the question, gave an order for the annulment of the unpopular measure.[13]

The circumstances underlying Legislative Decree No. 31 of May 14, 1980, provide another example of the role that Asad allows the peasants' organization to play in political life. The decree reduced the maximum limit of individual holdings from 55 to 45 hectares in irrigated land and from 300 to 200 hectares in rainfed lands, and was passed at the urging of the Peasants' General Union, which was anxious to satisfy, at least partially, grass-roots demands primarily by landless sharecroppers and agricultural laborers.[14]

Asad retains a basic sense of the moods of the peasants, whom he considers to be his natural constituency and with whose feelings he is instinctively in accord. It is significant that in the late 1970s and early 1980s he brought in peasants from the countryside to counter the demonstrations and strikes that broke out in Ḥamāh and Aleppo, and that on March 10, 1980, at a high point in the onslaught on his regime by the Muslim Brethren, he authorized the formation, on a voluntary basis and as an adjunct to the Peasants' General Union, of the Peasants' Armed Detachments. By the end of 1980 this force counted 23,546 men, but grew to 34,496 in 1985 and 46,239 men in 1990.[15]

When all these developments are viewed in the context of the centuries anterior to the twentieth, the contrast is striking. In those centuries seldom did the peasants come within the purview of the rulers of Syria except as a source of revenue. We look in vain in the extant historical sources for an expression of sustained interest on their part in the life and problems of the peasants. Even the historians took little notice of them. It would seem that from their standpoint what went on in the villages was not worthy of narration.

CHAPTER 21

A Closer View of the Summit of Power, or Asad's Personality as a Factor in the Maintenance of His Rule and the Thwarting of His Opponents

ASAD'S SUCCESS in taking the reins of government and in holding them firmly for so long under difficult objective conditions is partly explicable by qualities with which he is well endowed or which, on the basis of experience and through personal discipline, he has assiduously cultivated.

As a rule, he does not act on impulse. He is patient, passionless, flexible, adept at quiet behind-the-scenes skills, imperturbable in times of crisis, adroit enough to hide his real aims, and he decides only after examining issues from every conceivable angle. He also keeps his eyes fixed on what is realizable, and knows how to trim his sails to new winds or to accommodate his tactics to changing circumstances. In all this he is helped by his intimate knowledge of the forces at work in his home base and regional environment, and by his marked sensitivity to the intricacies of Arab and world politics. This portrayal applies more to the Asad of 1998, of course, than to the Asad of 1966, for although he had a role in shaping events in Syria and the neighboring countries, events at home and abroad also shaped him or he adapted himself to them.

As early as 1974, U.S. President Richard Nixon got a sense of who Asad was and who he would be. He had paid him a visit in Damascus in the wake of the talks on the disengagement of Syrian and Israeli forces on the Golan Heights, and was "very impressed" with him. Asad, he wrote in his diary, "was . . . a tough negotiator but he has a great deal of mystique, tremendous stamina, and a lot of charm. . . . All in all he is a man of real substance, and at his age—forty-four—if he can avoid somebody shooting him or overthrowing him, he will be a leader to be reckoned with in this part of the world. . . . The man really has elements of genius, without any question."[1]

For his part, Henry Kissinger, Nixon's secretary of state, found Asad's performance during the disengagement negotiations "stunning." "Asad," he said, "had played out the string to absolutely the last possible millimeter" and decided to settle only after having made utterly sure that he had "squeezed the last drop of blood out of the stone."[2]

Richard Murphy, U.S. ambassador to Damascus from 1974 to 1978 and assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs from 1983 to 1989, shed further light on Asad's negotiating style. "Asad," he pointed out, *"listens very carefully to what his visitor has to say . . . and conducts the conversation on a very calm level, rarely permitting himself a display of emotion. One would not normally get from him a statement like 'I agree com-

pletely' or 'I disagree.' . . . While seeking to know as much as he could of my position, . . . he would keep his own cards close to his chest. . . . He is a man, who, from very little direct personal travel, has accumulated many insights about international affairs . . . and has known how to play with great skill what objectively were weak hands."[3]

No less illuminating is the characterization of Asad by Aleksander Zotov, a Soviet expert on the Middle East and Moscow's ambassador to Syria from 1989 to 1993. In the era of glasnost or, to be precise, in 1983, when he was a counsellor at the Soviet embassy in Washington, he was approached by this writer with a view to, among other things, eliciting from him comments on assertions made by Kissinger in his *Years of Upheaval*. During the preparatory phase of the disengagement talks of the mid-1970s, Kissinger wrote, Asad "was at pains to emphasize that Moscow enjoyed no preferential consultative status in Damascus" and "accepted the procedures in our plan . . . which excluded Moscow and assigned to the United States the function of mediator." "The President of Syria," added Kissinger at another point in his account, "remarkably, preferred to negotiate *without* his principal ally."[4] It is possible that by these assertions Kissinger sought to poison the waters between Moscow and Damascus. Be that as it may, at the time Zotov thought that Asad

> is very cunning . . . and too prudent to say things that would harm his dealings with the Soviet Union. Kissinger tried to engage Asad in a game behind our back. Asad himself perhaps thought it convenient to go along. He uses anybody who could serve his purpose. . . . In a concrete situation, being in Asad's shoes, being interested in involving the United States more deeply in a settlement of the conflict, believing that the United States is the only lever on the Israelis, he may have cultivated the impression that he is willing to play Kissinger's game. This was a matter of tactic. It is common knowledge that he is a very good tactician. Clearly for Asad, Kissinger was pro-Israel, a Zionist, and a representative of the country that gives almost unlimited support to Israel but at the same time a representative of a country without which he could hardly achieve what he wanted to achieve. From his point of view, it was useful to encourage Kissinger. In Asad's mind he could come later to Moscow and say, by way of explanation, "I used Kissinger, it was my tactic."[5]

These observations lend themselves easily to the inference that, when it comes to the art of manipulation, Asad is a match for Henry Kissinger. They both possess to use the unsympathizing words of the eighteenth-century thinker Adam Smith, "the skill of that insidious and crafty animal, vulgarly called a statesman or politician."[6]

Asad's mastery of the power game has been strongly attested also by his internal adversaries. The "Left" Baʿthists accounted for his triumph over them in these terms:

> From [the coup of] March 8, 1963, until [his seizure of power in] 1970 Ḥāfiz al-Asad was able to secure a presence in all the Baʿth party commands and to maneu-

> ver between all the contending party factions, moving between the Right and the Left and the Left and the Right with nimbleness and skill, while weaving at the same time a wide net of secret and open relations—as the need dictated—with all the factions, in order to leap from the trench of the losing side to the trench of the winning side at the last moment."[7]

Typical of Asad's methods was the overture he made to General Amīn al-Ḥāfiz prior to the coup of February 1966. Ḥāfiz, then Syria's head of state, had cast in his lot with the old-guard Baʿthists, who were preponderant in the party's National Command. He and Brigadier Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, who counted for much in the armed forces and controlled the party's Regional Command, were almost at daggers drawn. Asad commanded the air force and was, to all appearance, an ally of Jadīd, but had left the impression that he did not favor turning the conflict into a violent test of strength. At this juncture, according to Ḥāfiz, Asad called on him. "Abū ʿAbdū [father of ʿAbdū]," he was quoted to have said, "we all have confidence in you. Dissociate yourself from the [National] Command. It has support neither among the military nor among the civilians. Put your hand in mine and let us act in concert." Ḥāfiz refused to turn his back upon the veteran Baʿthists. "They are plotting against you," Asad pressed on.[8] It is not clear whether Ḥāfiz tried to draw Asad into a fuller disclosure, or had cause to think that his words did not compel belief, or felt that he sought to make a tool of him. What matters is that Asad's overture did not avail. When, eventually, Ḥāfiz was pulled down by Jadīd and he and his associates were placed in confinement, Asad, according to Manṣūr al-Atrash, an old-guard Baʿthist, "insisted on treating . . . [the] detainees with respect, against the will of the extremist members of the Regional Command of the party, comrades of yesterday."[9] Asad, now minister of defense, also helped with the expense of the treatment at a hospital in France of Ḥāfiz's children who were injured when in the course of the confrontation his residence came under fierce attack.[10] By behaving thus, Asad revealed again his political astuteness.

The ways he dealt with his internal opponents after he achieved undivided authority throw into sharper relief the aspects of his personality that bear on the exercise of power. To bitter or implacable adversaries, who represented a real danger to his position, he showed no mercy. In the wake of his bout in 1970 with Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, he threw him in prison where, after the latter rejected an offer of freedom in return for political quiescence, he was left to rot; a quiet resignation, sustained by the fortitude of despair, settling down upon him until death put an end in 1993 to his misfortune. In the ceremony attendant upon his burial and during the offer of condolences, a Qurʾānic verse different from the one appropriate to such occasions was reportedly read out. For the verse, "To God we belong and to Him is our return," was substituted the verse, "And they who act unjustly shall see what reverses shall befall them."[11]

Another rival, General Muḥammad ʿUmrān, was shot dead in 1972 as he prepared to return to Syria from exile in the Lebanese city of Tripoli.[12] At the time he seemed a potentially serious player by dint of his past role and the

weight he still carried in the armed forces, even though Asad had drawn into his own orbit many of ʿUmrān's former military associates. The "Left" Baʿthists who had fled the country were quick to charge Asad with the murder. As they put it later in a book meant "strictly for internal use," "we all know that the basic striking force instrumental in the success of Asad's [1970] coup consisted of the partisans of Muḥammad ʿUmrān . . . and yet Asad did not hesitate to reward them by assassinating their leader."[13] For his part, Asad announced the appointment of a commission of inquiry and gave assurance that "the murderers will be brought to justice."[14] But nothing further was heard about the commission or the outcome of its investigations. In 1975, in venting "horror" at the slaying in an Iraqi prison of Fūʾād ar-Rikābī, who led Iraq's Baʿth party from 1952 to 1959, Asad exclaimed: "Imagine that we in Syria should assassinate a citizen because he is against us politically!! . . . This is a very strange thing not only in this but in any age!!"[15]

Earlier, rumors had circulated that fastened the responsibility for ʿUmrān's murder ultimately upon Rifʿat, the president's brother, and more directly upon Nazīh Zurayr, a General Intelligence officer from al-Qaryatayn, a village in Ḥimṣ province, or upon General Najī Jamīl, a native of Dayr-iz-Zūr and head of the National Security Bureau of the regional Baʿth Command.[16] But these rumors did not turn the public mind from the conviction that Asad's was the guiding brain. "In my judgment," affirmed afterwards a former Baʿthist leader, "no one [in the regime] lower in position than Asad would dare decide on [a matter as grave as] an assassination."[17]

Similarly, in terms of ultimate responsibility it is difficult to let Asad off the hook as regards the violent death in 1977 of Kamāl Junblāt, the head of the Lebanese National Movement, and in 1980 in Paris of Ṣalāḥ-ud-Dīn al-Bīṭār, the Baʿth party cofounder.[18] Junblāt had stood in the way of Asad's intervention in Lebanon, and Bīṭār had become a central figure in the opposition active abroad at a critical point in Asad's "time of troubles," that is, when his regime writhed in the throes of a clandestine war by Islamic militants.

It was his reaction to this war that glaringly bared the streak of cold ruthlessness in Asad, but the tactics he employed to avert or ward off the insurgence also revealed the complexity of his character and his marked political acumen. It is worth while, therefore, to subject to close scrutiny these and the other tactics to which he had recourse in his campaign against his Islamic opponents.

CHAPTER 22

Of the Manner in Which Asad Dealt with the Muslim Brethren and Their Militants, and the Light It Throws on the Methods by Which He Holds Sway

Coping with the Muslim Brethren by Propitiating the ʿUlamāʾ and How the ʿUlamāʾ Responded

From the beginning of his regime Asad sought to contain the more intractable elements within the Muslim Brotherhood by stretching out his hand to the ʿulamāʾ, that is, the men learned in religious lore. He missed no opportunity to honor them or attend to their concerns. In 1971 he arranged for the seating in the then-appointive People's Assembly of several Muslim dignitaries, including Shaykh Aḥmad Kaftārū, the muftī of the Republic, and Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ḥakīm, the muftī of Aleppo.[1] In 1973 he made large personal contributions to Sharīʿah or Islamic law schools in the province of Ḥamāh and to a religious organization devoted to charity in Ḥimṣ.[2] In 1974 he raised the pay of the country's 1,138 imāms (prayer leaders), 252 mudarris (teachers), 610 khaṭībs (preachers), 1,038 muʾazzins (announcers of the hour of prayer), and 280 qāriʾs (reciters of Qurʾanic verses).[3] He augmented their remuneration further in 1976, and again in 1980. Under his auspices 5.4 million Syrian pounds were earmarked in 1976 for the construction of new mosques.[4] Every year on a specified day in Ramaḍān, the month of abstinence, he broke—and still breaks—fast with the principal ʿulamāʾ. "You and I," he told them on one such occasion, "need one another: I need to hear from you yearly, for through your words I sense not only your feelings but the feelings and desires of the people, anxious as I am, being a fellow countryman at the topmost point of responsibility to seek only what the people want."[5]

Between 1970 and 1975 only one issue cast a shadow over the friendly relations that Asad sought to cultivate with the ʿulamāʾ: the noninclusion in the pronouncedly secular draft constitution adopted by the People's Assembly on January 31, 1973, of a clause that had formed part of the pre-1963 constitution, and had specified that "Islam is the religion of the state." The new draft merely referred to Islamic jurisprudence as "a principal source of legislation," and guaranteed "the freedom of belief" and the "respect of the state" for "all religions."[6] There is no trace of any complaint being made in this connection, however, by the muftīs represented in the People's Assembly. Except for the active role of the fearless Shaykh Ḥasan Ḥabannakah, who was held in reverence in the Maydān quarter of Damascus, the protests were voiced in the mosques by humbler ʿulamāʾ and with fury by militants in the streets, especially

at Ḥims and Ḥamāh. Eager to defuse the risk of further unrest and heal the incipient division, Asad introduced on February 20 an amendment to the constitution which declared that "the religion of the president of the Republic is Islam." At the same time, he insisted on "rejecting every uncultured interpretation of Islam that lays bare an odious narrow-mindedness and a loathsome bigotry, Islam being the religion of love, progress, social justice, and equality for all."[7] To counter the charge flung at him by zealots that he belonged to a "heretical" sect, eighty ʿAlawī religious personages issued at this point a formal statement affirming unqualifiedly that their book is the Qurʾān, that they are Muslims and Shīʿī, and, like the majority of Shīʿīs, Ithnā ʿAshariyyah or Twelvers, that is, partisans of the twelve Imāms.[8] Their statement was endorsed by Lebanon's distinguished Jaʿfarī (Shīʿī) Muftī ʿAbd-ul-Amīr Qabalān. In an authoritative opinion, Imām Mūsa aṣ-Ṣaḍr, the president of Lebanon's Supreme Islamic Shīʿī Council, also confirmed the ʿAlawīs' "confessional unity" with the Shīʿīs.[9]

For their part, the Sunnī ʿulamāʾ responded in different ways to Asad's attempts to gain their goodwill. In Damascus, for example, they were from this standpoint divided in feelings or interests. Some chose to keep out of harm's way by keeping out of politics altogether. Others, notably the disciples of Shaykh Ḥasan Ḥabannakah, who had been involved in campaigns of civil disobedience in 1964 and 1967, and against whose candidacy for the office of the muftī of the Republic the Baʿth leaders had thrown their weight in 1965, remained at best indifferent, if not negative or wanting in cordiality toward Asad's government. Still other ʿulamāʾ, mostly the graduates of the schools and the Institute of *Sharʿī* Sciences[10] run by the Muslim philanthropic association al-Gharrāʾ,[11] cooperated guardedly with the regime. Founded in 1924 by the venerable Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAlī ad-Daqar, al-Gharrāʾ has close ties with the city's well-to-do merchants, who helped the association financially and were strongly represented in its board of trustees, and to whom Asad's shift in 1970 to more liberal economic policies had been very congenial.

Most accommodating to Asad, however, were the ʿulamāʾ, who took their cue from Shaykh Aḥmad Kaftārū. Born in 1910 in the Kurdish quarter of Damascus to a religious personage of Kurdish extraction, Kaftārū, who was reputed as far back as the 1940s for his "eloquent" sermons and his efforts "to promote harmony between the Muslims and their Christian brothers,"[12] had been invested with the dignity of the muftī of the Republic in 1965, thanks in part to pressure exerted on the members of the Higher Islamic Council by the Baʿth regime of the day. Kaftārū never wavered in his support of Asad. Typical of his attitude in this regard was his portrayal in 1991 of assent to the re-election of Asad to the presidency as "a national obligation and a religious duty."[13] It is presumably to ʿulamāʾ of Kaftārū's tendency that ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn, a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, referred when he lashed out at "the elders of religion who sell themselves" and "represent neither the conscience of the Syrian people nor the bent of mind of the true ʿulamāʾ."[14]

From the viewpoint of the Muslim Brotherhood, "the true ʿulamāʾ" were the

ʿulamāʾ who shared its beliefs or, at least, sympathized with its cause.[15] These were, for the most part, urban ʿulamāʾ of middle or lower-middle status, and often also petty traders or handicraftsmen, unable, as many of them were, to live on the meager income they derived from religious service.

Benefiting from the Divisions within the Brotherhood

During the first half of the seventies, the animosity that the Muslim Brotherhood felt toward Asad and his regime was kept down by dissensions within its ranks. Its members were torn between three groups that held discordant views, namely, "the Fighting Vanguard," which attracted the younger members of the Brotherhood, particularly in Ḥamāh, and was launched by Marwān Ḥadīd; the more cautious "Damascus faction" guided by ʿIṣām al-ʿAṭṭār; and the wing of the movement identified with Shaykh ʿAbd-ul-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah of Aleppo, which in 1972 secured the recognition of the international parent body.

The first group, while remaining in the Brotherhood's fold, took initially—in 1973—the name of "the Fighting Vanguard of the Party of God," but later became known as "the Fighting Vanguard of the Muslim Brethren."[16] Its leader, Marwān Ḥadīd, had been born in 1934 at Ḥamāh to "a wealthy family."[17] Whether the social policies pursued by the Baʿthists had detrimental effects on his family's fortunes can only be conjectured. His father was not a landowner but an agricultural entrepreneur who exploited lands under lease in Syria's northeastern region of aj-Jazīrah.[18] Ḥadīd was dignified by his adherents with the title of "shaykh," though he was not, strictly speaking, a man of ʿilm or Islamic knowledge, but had received training in agronomics at the Egyptian University of ʿAyn Shams, from which he graduated in 1962. While in Cairo he came under the influence of the activist wing of the Brotherhood, which drew its inspiration from Sayyid Quṭb.

An enthusiast who would in 1966 suffer death by hanging, Quṭb believed that "mankind stands on the edge of the precipice . . . by dint of its bankruptcy in the realm of ʿvalues.'" Related to this belief was another idea no less deeply fixed in Quṭb, namely, the need "to liberate man . . . from every authority other than that of God . . . and His Sharīʿah" or revealed law and this, he maintained, could only be achieved by "an out-and-out revolution against every form or manner of sovereignty by men."[19]

Moved by Quṭb's ardor and resentful of the seizure of power by the Baʿth, Ḥadīd became involved, after his return from Egypt, in the uprising that broke out at Ḥamāh in 1964 and led to the shelling by the regime's forces of as-Sulṭān mosque. He himself ended up in prison and was only released after an intercession on his behalf by Ḥamāh's popular Shaykh Muḥammād al-Ḥāmid, who had been in the 1940s a friend of Ḥasan al-Banna, the Egyptian founder of the Brotherhood,[20] and now played a prominent role in allaying passions and mediating between the government and the populace.[21]

Shaken next by the Arab military defeat of 1967, Ḥadīd and other young

militants left Syria for Jordan in 1968 and there joined Fatḥ, the principal arm of the Palestinian resistance movement, receiving commando training in one of its camps.[22] Not long after Asad's coup of 1970, Ḥadīd was back in Ḥamāh and in 1973, as already noted, set on foot the Fighting Vanguard, and began now to agitate for taking up arms against the regime on the ground that it did not "rule by the Qur'ān and the Tradition of the Prophet," and that Asad and his associates were "infidels."[23]

Among the members of the Damascus faction, Ḥadīd's call for armed resistance found little sympathy, at least until 1976. They were too closely connected with the merchants of the capital, who by and large opposed a policy of violent confrontation with the regime. Their leader, ʿIṣām al-ʿAṭṭār, a native of the ʿAmārah quarter of Damascus, a descendant of a family of ʿulamāʾ of intermediate social standing, a teacher of Arabic literature by calling, and, for a while, an imām (prayer leader) at the mosque of Damascus University, rejected at this time all thought of defending or promoting the fundamentalist cause by force of arms. In 1973, at age fifty-one, he lived in exile in the city of Aachen. He had left Syria in 1964 for the ḥajj or pilgrimage to Mecca and, on his return, had been denied entry at the border; after a two-year sojourn in Lebanon and his expulsion from that country, he led, in his words, "a wandering life," eventually—in 1968—settling in West Germany because, as he put it, "all Arab countries . . . closed their doors to me."[24] Nevertheless, one way or another he contrived to keep in touch with his principal lieutenants in Damascus and chart their line of conduct.

For their part, the followers of Shaykh ʿAbd-ul-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah, while not excluding violence as an option, were inclined to view it as premature. It was not on this issue that they had parted ways with the Damascus faction. The real point of contention between the two groups was the continuance of ʿIṣām al-ʿAṭṭār as superintendent general of Syria's Brotherhood. In this capacity he had guided the entire organization since 1961. Doubts about his effectiveness were raised by Abū Ghuddah as early as 1968. A teacher of the Sharīʿah or Islamic law, a deputy in the parliament of "the secessionist period" (that of 1961–1963), Abū Ghuddah had begun life as a weaver and had helped set up the Aleppo branch of the Brotherhood in 1935. He and other fundamentalist figures, such as ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn, a schoolteacher from Ḥamāh, a son of a small grain merchant, and from 1961 to 1962 the head of a school in ad-Dawḥah, the capital of Qaṭar, felt that al-ʿAṭṭār was unrestrained in his authority and steered the movement without consulting any of his associates. They were also irritated by his "sonorous" speeches, the "lack of precision" in his ideas, and the "vagueness" of his aims. According to Saʿd-ud-Dīn, the dispute was fed by dissimilarities in the temper of the Damascenes and that of the Aleppans and Ḥamawis, the latter being in general more "direct" and "unbending" and the Damascenes more "ambiguous" or more "subtle" in handling matters.[25] At least as far as al-ʿAṭṭār is concerned, Saʿd-ud-Dīn's view finds support in a portrait of al-ʿAṭṭār drawn by Khālid al-ʿAzm, Syria's prime minister in 1948–1949, 1951, and 1962–1963. "I knew of no man," wrote al-ʿAzm in his memoirs,

> whose aims or the feelings he harbored were as unfathomable. With a sweet smile on his lips and rubbing his hands, he speaks to you in a soft voice and with all humility. Suddenly he flares up, shakes his hands, and , with his voice set at a higher pitch and fury in his eyes, he bursts into threats and impending denunciations from pulpits and mosques. When he realizes you are unaffected and attach no weight to his words, he quiets down, his expressions relax and the gentle smile reappears on his face.[26]

The dissensions within the Brotherhood came to a head in 1972 when, with the approval of the international parent organization, al-ʿAṭṭār was supplanted as superintendent general by Shaykh Abū Ghuddah. Simultaneously, the movement's executive bureau and its newly formed shūra or consultative council assumed a substantive role in its decision-making process. Abū Ghuddah remained at the helm until 1975, when the reins passed into the hands of ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn.[27] The members of the Damascus faction stood almost to a man against these changes and, persisting in their loyalty to al-ʿAṭṭār, went their own way.

The rupture in the Brotherhood, by affecting its power of action, redounded for the time being to Asad's advantage, enabling him to consolidate his personal rule. The refusal of any of its factions to join hands with secular dissidents of any stripe had the same effect. Asad's hold on power was also strengthened by the rapid progress in Syria's economy in the first half of the 1970s induced by his measures toward partial liberalization, his rapprochement with the Saʿudis, the sharp rise in the price of oil in the wake of the 1973 war, and the related wide-scale aid from the Arab Gulf states and increase in remittances by Syrian migrant laborers. Under these circumstances Asad's opponents had little chance to forge ahead. "The opposition," affirmed a Damascus writer in 1975, "is so insignificant that it doesn't have the bite of a flea."[28]

After 1975, however, things began to change. The flow of Arab oil money, which had been copious, diminished sharply. The heightened scale of peasant migration and a mounting rate of inflation deepened the injury to the social fabric of the principal cities.[29] Rents became impossibly high for the middle and humbler classes, with modest apartments in the better parts of the capital going for 60,000 or even 80,000 Syrian pounds (roughly $13,800 or $18,400) a year. An honest man could no longer live on his salary. Laborers and petty state employees had to take two jobs just to survive. The small-scale trading class from which the Brotherhood drew part of its membership was adversely affected by the rise of agricultural cooperatives in rural districts and consumers' cooperatives in urban areas. Sellers who traveled from village to village and constituted a large group at Ḥamāh, where they were known as *al-mutaʿiyyishīn*, were apparently similarly hurt. The growth of a parasitic class of state contractors, the rampant corruption in the upper layers of the bureaucracy, and the fat commissions made on government contracts by men close to the pinnacle of power added to the popular discontent. Wide segments of Syrian opinion were also alienated by Asad's intervention in 1976 against the Palestinians in the

Lebanese conflict. But from the standpoint of the Muslim Brethren, the most aggravating factor was the sharpened ʿAlawī bias of the regime and the deepening erosion of the power of the Sunnī community.

Encouraging the Quietism of the Brotherhood's "Damascus Faction"?

The first violent act by the Fighting Vanguard was the shooting to death early in 1976 of Major Muḥammad Gharrah, chief of the Ḥamāh branch of General Intelligence. From a prison in Damascus word had filtered through to the militants of the Fighting Vanguard that their leader, Marwān Ḥadīd, underwent protracted torture. He had been captured on July 1, 1975, in a raid on a house in the ʿAdawī quarter of Damascus, but not before suffering injury and losing consciousness. His partisans would maintain later that he had also been in poor health and did not receive in prison the necessary medical attention, and would latch onto his death in July 1976 as evidence of government ill-treatment. The authorities, for their part, would claim that he had been on a hunger strike. Be that as it may, the way he died made him a "martyr" in the eyes of his admirers and stirred them to further violence. It also chafed on many people in Ḥamāh.[30]

At this juncture or, to be precise, on August 7, 1976, Asad reshuffled his government. He placed more Sunnīs in high-profile posts and, at the same time, appointed Najāḥ al-ʿAṭṭār, the sister of the leader of the Brotherhood's Damascus faction, as minister of culture and national guidance. Asad seldom aims where he looks and his ulterior intentions are often hard to fathom, but it is justifiable to infer that by this move he sought at least to encourage the quietism of the Damascus faction, and perhaps deepen the breach within the Brotherhood. However, the inclusion of Najāḥ al-ʿAṭṭār in his government could also be explained on other grounds. A holder of a doctorate in Arabic literature from the University of Edinburgh, a person of independent views, a respected schoolteacher and woman of letters and, prior to her elevation to the cabinet, the director of composition and literary translation in the Ministry of Culture, Najāḥ al-ʿAṭṭār was fully qualified for her new post. Moreover, she was on visiting terms with Asad's wife, an outgrowth of a certain rapport that had sprung up between Asad and her husband Colonel Mājid al-ʿAzmah, a top-notch surgeon and the director of the Mezzeh Military Hospital, the lines of their lives having crossed in years past. At any rate, it is significant that for the next two years ʿIṣām al-ʿAṭṭār's Damascus faction continued to distance itself from the violent acts of the Fighting Vanguard. Indeed, a Baʿthist source blamed "members of the Ḥamāh organization" for "all the [political] murders perpetrated in Damascus" in 1976 and 1977, except for the involvement of two Damascenes whom the Fighting Vanguard had won over to its cause.[31]

Still relatively weak in number but unswerving in purpose, and now led by ʿAbd-us-Sattār az-Zaʿīm, a dentist of humble origin from Ḥamāh, the militants of the Fighting Vanguard confined themselves until 1979 to persistent minor

blows in the hope of provoking the regime, involving it in repressive policies, and estranging it further from the people. They concentrated on hit-and-run killings of ʿAlawī functionaries, security agents, and professional men, focusing attention on their origins and the origins of Asad outside the Sunnī Muslim main current of Syria's life.

Facing the Militants' Violent Blows and Their Large-scale Armed Rebellions, or the Gravest Internal Challenge to His Regime

On June 16, 1979, the militants of the Fighting Vanguard struck a spectacular blow that heralded a major escalation in their campaign against the regime. According to the official version of the event, the officer on duty at the Aleppo Artillery Academy, Captain Ibrahīm Yūsuf—a twenty-nine-year-old man of peasant stock from Tādef, a town to the northeast of Aleppo—furnished army uniforms and the academy's secret password to eleven militants of the Fighting Vanguard and to their leader in Aleppo Ḥusnī ʿĀbū—a teacher of French at the local high school, a son of a well-to-do merchant, and a son-in-law of Shaykh Zayn-ud-Dīn Khayr-ul-Lāh, the Imām of the city's Grand Mosque. After making sure that the militants were inside the building, Captain Yūsuf, with ʿĀbū at his side, summoned the academy's three hundred or so cadets to the assembly hall. As soon as he ascertained that all were present, he called out the names of cadets entered in a list prepared beforehand and ordered them to leave the hall. After their departure, he turned to the remaining and as yet unsuspecting cadets and warned them not to stir. The hall, he said, was "mined" from one end to the other. For a moment there was silence. Then, in a shrill voice, he added: "Death awaits you!" Whereupon, to cut the narrative short, the militants stormed into the hall with guns blazing. By the time the rampage was over thirty-two cadets had been killed and the others wounded and "disfigured."[32] In the first official announcement of the raid, the regime threw the blame for the killings on "the Muslim Brotherhood" without specifying the Fighting Vanguard by name. For this it may have had its own reasons, or perhaps the evidence was as yet lacking for a reconstruction of the event in full detail. Moreover, at no point did it mention the sectarian affiliation of the victims. But the public drew the inference that they were preponderantly, if not all, ʿAlawīs.

News of the ghastly happenings at the artillery academy had powerful reverberations. Many Syrians, regardless of their political beliefs, were appalled by the killing or maiming of innocent cadets. The different elements of the secular opposition felt that the indiscriminate murder of ʿAlawīs did not make sense politically and was bound to inflame sectarian feelings and make Syria even more vulnerable in a regional context shaken by Egypt's conclusion on March 26, 1979, of a separate peace with Israel. At Aachen, in a statement issued on June 28, ʿIṣām al-ʿAṭṭār deplored that the regime should charge "the Muslim Brethren" with the raid on the academy. "It is," he said, "a barefaced lie unsupported by any fact or proof. It is enough to mention that the leader of the raid is not only a Baʿthist of long standing but also the security officer and the party

chief at the academy. . . . By blaming 'the Muslim Brethren' for the incident, Syria's rulers may be trying to conceal the contradictions and violent struggles within their own ranks or may be preparing a climate conducive to the uprooting of the Islamic forces one after the other."[33]

That the leader of the raid, Captain Ibrahīm Yūsuf, had been a Baʿthist is true, but that he had been won over by the Fighting Vanguard is also incontrovertible. As ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn, a key figure in the faction of the Brotherhood recognized by the international parent body, put it in 1982: "Ibrahīm Yūsuf [whom the security forces killed on June 2, 1980] was among the pioneers in [the movement's] military activities. . . . Within the Baʿth party he had had to answer for his religiosity."[34]

Even before the killings at the artillery academy, the various factions of the Brotherhood had felt the need for pushing their differences into the background. Evidence in the possession of the regime apparently indicated that ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn, the superintendent general of the main organization from 1975 to 1980, accompanied by three of his aides, met in Beirut on January 1, 1978, with ʿAbd-us-Sattār az-Zaʿīm, the leader of the Fighting Vanguard, and put forward proposals with a view to at least common action by the two groups, if not a fusion of their forces and the appointment of Zaʿīm as commissioner for armed struggle in the Brotherhood's Executive Bureau. Zaʿīm is said to have opted for a "coordination" of efforts, but the maintenance by each group of "separate" armed formations. Interrogations of captured militants also yielded information that at a subsequent point, Zaʿīm and Saʿd-ud-Dīn "agreed on other things which they kept secret and of which no one else [in the Brotherhood] was apprised." As Saʿd-ud-Dīn did not live in Syria but in Jordan, he chose as his go-between with Zaʿīm Riyād Jaʿmūr, a member of the Executive Bureau and an industrial engineer from Ḥamāh.[35] Early in 1979, however, Jaʿmūr fell into the regime's security net and contacts between the two leaders became for a time impossible.[36] This explains why Saʿd-ud-Dīn had no advance knowledge of the raid on the artillery academy, which, in retrospect, he deemed it prudent to condemn.

As for the Damascus faction, it would seem that the authorities held proof that its leader, ʿIṣām al-ʿAṭṭār, had at some point in 1978 shifted course, signifying approval of the method of armed struggle and encouraging his followers to make common cause with the Fighting Vanguard. More than that, he is said to have arranged, through an intermediary,[37] for the transfer to its command of "large amounts of money."[38] But al-ʿAṭṭār's links with the militant organization appear to have been of a random or desultory nature and, like his rival Saʿd-ud-Dīn, he was taken unawares by the rampage at the artillery academy.

As Asad now settled to fight the whole movement with grimmer purpose, adherence to the unity of ranks became, for the faction-ridden Brotherhood, the overriding consideration. The recurrent violence-studded demonstrations and strikes that gripped Aleppo in 1979–1980, the attendant heavy-handed repression by the regime, and the slaying, one after the other, in the course of 1980, of ʿAbd-us-Sattār az-Zaʿīm, the top leader of the Fighting Vanguard, and of four of his successors gave added impetus to efforts toward a coalescence of forces.

At length, in December 1980 a Joint Command of twelve men took shape, with each of the three factions being represented by four members. Dr. Ḥasan Huwaydī, an adherent of the Brotherhood since 1942, a supporter of ʿIṣām al-ʿAṭṭār, and a physician from Dayr-az-Zūr and from the seminomadic tribe of al-Mayādīn, was chosen as the new superintendent general. The Joint Command also comprised, among others, Saʿīd Ḥawwa, a teacher from Ḥamāh, a descendant of a small farmer, and the Brotherhood's chief ideologue; ʿAlī al-Bayānūnī, an Aleppan lawyer from a religious shaykhly family; and of course, ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn, who now served as deputy superintendent general. The chief representative of the Fighting Vanguard in the Joint Command was ʿAdnān ʿUqlah, a thirty-year-old civil engineer from the Golan born to a policeman-turned-baker, and in 1980 the Vanguard's most active figure, particularly at Aleppo.[39]

One of the first acts of the Joint Command was to launch on January 17, 1981, an Islamic Front with Muḥammad Abū-n-Naṣr al-Bayānūnī, a religious shaykh from Aleppo, as its secretary general. Through the new front, the Joint Command hoped, among other things, "to integrate the dispersed Muslims' efforts and orient them . . . toward the establishment of God's rule on earth, by putting forward a plan for joint action to which all would agree"; "to give added force to the Islamic tide and revive the duty of *jihād*"; and "to seek a political formula acceptable to all of Syria's citizens."[40] Despite the strong objection of the uncompromising ʿAdnān ʿUqlah of the Fighting Vanguard, the Joint Command tried to attract to the front even Asad's secular opponents by proclaiming the front's attachment to the principles of the independence of the judiciary, the separation of powers, the guarantee of the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, the opening of opportunities impartially to all, and the freedom of the citizenry to think, publish, and form political parties within the bounds of "a constitution and laws resting, in letter and spirit, on Islam."[41] In the end, however, the Joint Command succeeded in incorporating within the front, apart from the Muslim Brethren, only ṣūfīs, that is, ascetic mystics, and other distinctly Muslim elements.

In one of its earliest meetings, the Joint Command is said to have also decided "to capture power in April or May of 1982."[42] This, if true, appears in retrospect to have been a foolhardy decision, inasmuch as the Brotherhood did not have then or later the military means to overpower the regime. It was, indeed, well provided with automatic rifles, machine guns, mortars, and rocket launchers, but lacked heavier weapons and, although it had no difficulty recruiting men who were ardently attached to its cause or daring to the point of recklessness, it had a relatively thin foothold in the armed forces. For this it had to thank, in part, its traditional leadership, which did not believe in military coups. But the more conclusive explanation lies in the special policy the regime pursued in raising men for its crucial striking units and the vigilant eye it kept on every part of its fighting machine.[43]

With a view to upgrading the military capabilities of the Brotherhood, the Joint Command reportedly turned to Iraq and Jordan for assistance. Three of its members—Saʿd-ud-Dīn, Ḥawwa, and ʿUqlah—traveled (the regime roundly as-

serts) to Baghdad in 1981, and met first with Ṭāha aj-Jazrāwī, a member of the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council, and later, in the absence of ʿUqlah, with Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, and received assurances that in addition to the training already provided to Muslim militants in the camps of the Iraqi army, the Brotherhood could count on Iraq for "full support with arms and money." The outcome of a subsequent meeting in Jordan between the same three delegates of the Joint Command and an unnamed representative of King Ḥusayn is also said to have been "positive."[44]

In the meantime, even as efforts were afoot to close ranks and enhance the striking power of the Brotherhood, its armed elements, and particularly the men of the Fighting Vanguard, had been stepping up their campaign to destabilize the regime: they carried out attacks—especially in the northern cities—on government buildings, cooperative stores, police stations, and army units, and provoked demonstrations and large-scale shutdowns of shops and schools. Apart from the attempt on June 26, 1980, on Asad's life, which met with failure, the campaign had two high points, one in March-April 1980 at Aleppo, when for several weeks nearly two-thirds of the city broke loose from the regime's control, and the other in February 1982 at Ḥamāh, when a general insurrection unleashed the old antipathies of sect to sect and countryside to city, and a new thirst for vengeance on the part of the holders of power, the strife ending in a bloodbath without parallel in the modern history of Syria.

It is now known beyond doubt that the revolt at Ḥamāh was planned beforehand or, to be more precise, in January 1982, by ʿAdnān ʿUqlah, the leader of the Fighting Vanguard, in concert with ʿUmar Jawād, the militants' local chief.[45] The code word on which both agreed, and which was meant to serve as the signal for the general rising, was broadcast from "the Voice of the Mujāhidīn or Holy Warriors" in Iraq. However, an unexpected but abortive raid on February 2 by a unit of five hundred men drawn from the Defense Companies and the Military Intelligence on ʿUmar Jawād's underground stronghold in a back alley of the city's Barūdiyyah quarter led to calls by militants for an all-out rebellion through microphones atop the minarets of Ḥamāh's mosques two days ahead of the scheduled zero hour.[46]

With the minds of the people scarred by the extensive devastation and heavy loss in human lives at Ḥamāh, the Brotherhood's command deemed it necessary to intimate that ʿAdnān ʿUqlah acted on his own initiative and without its approval. In dismissing him from the movement on April 25, 1982, it adduced, as its grounds, among others, "the considerable damage that ensued from the way he directed the fighting in Aleppo" and "his role in drawing the mujahidīn into the ill-timed confrontation at Ḥamāh."[47] The Brotherhood's deputy superintendent general went farther. "All of ʿAdnān ʿUqlah's actions," he said, "proceeded from want of prudence, undue haste, or sheer recklessness."[48] The partisans of ʿUqlah may say that his faulting by the movement's command for improper or rash decisions is little more than an attempt to make him a scapegoat, but the known facts do not appear to admit of such an interpretation.

It should be pointed out that the militants involved in the campaign against the regime were mostly young men in their late teens or in their twenties or

early thirties, and in large part secondary school or university students, teachers, and members of the professions. This is suggested by the occupational distribution of the activists—mostly Muslim Brethren but also vocal members of the secular opposition parties and of the professional associations—who were captured or arrested by the government between 1976 and May 1981. Out of a total of 1,384, no fewer than 27.7 percent were students, 7.9 percent schoolteachers, and 13.3 percent professionals, including 79 engineers, 57 physicians, 25 lawyers, and 10 pharmacists.[49] The already-provided profiles of the chiefs of the Fighting Vanguard and of the key members of the Brotherhood's Joint Command bear out that the movement's guiding layer emanated from the professional middle class. While maintaining that artisans and shopkeepers formed a significant component of the society's membership, its deputy superintendent general confirmed in 1982 that its militants were drawn by and large from their offspring or their educated elements—primarily college students, and to a lesser extent, teachers and other members of the intelligentsia.[50]

Using Force at First Guardedly and Differentiating between the Militants, Leaving Open a Line of Retreat for "the Misled" among Them

In tracing the main features of the armed rebellions as they unfolded between 1979 and 1982, emphasis has thus far been laid on the actions and reactions of one of the contending sides, namely, the Muslim Brotherhood. It is time now to throw into relief how Asad responded in that period to the gravest internal challenge his regime faced.

Initially and until March of 1980, Asad's policy toward the Muslim Brethren was pitched in a low key. He used force against them sparingly and with restraint; he appears to have been anxious in that phase of the conflict to avoid a degree of severity that could lead to embitterment and a more hardened resistance. He also sought to keep open a line of retreat for at least some of the militants, by taking pains to draw as late as December 22, 1979, a distinction between two elements among "those who offend religion in the name of religion"—an element "that is misled and unaware of the dangers to its faith and its world involved in its line of conduct," and an element "that misleads and knows where it is heading" and whose "suspicious moves are tied to the aims of Camp David." As far as the first element was concerned, Asad was willing to go on, as formerly, "bearing responsibility for attempts to raise its consciousness and open its eyes to that which serves and that which harms religion and moral values." But to the other element—which he rhetorically divorced from "the genuinely devout" and cast as "sham-believers" who "have abandoned every notion we have cherished through our long history as a people and a nation"—he made plain that although he was prepared "to be all ears" and "to listen to every opinion," he would not permit "an undue exploitation" of his "forbearance," and he threatened, in the event of nondesistance from the course

being pursued, "to use violence in an appropriate form at the appropriate time." Asad also sharply distinguished the Muslim Brethren from "the conservatives," who "form in our country a wide and important sector . . . and to whom solicitous care is due."[51]

Feeling out the Country's Temper

Earlier, in the summer and autumn of 1979, as the Muslim Brethren's defiance of the regime produced an atmosphere of crisis and emboldened the secular opposition to rear its head, Asad, deeming it advisable to feel out the country's bent of mind, met with workers, merchants, peasants, teachers, and literary figures and encouraged them to vent their views freely. Some, wearing their hearts upon their sleeves, obliged him. Misgovernment, corruption, and the flashy life-styles of the regime's elite ranked among the key issues that they raised. But the most hard-hitting criticism was aired in a seven-hour meeting of the Union of Writers and Journalists held on October 9, 1979. The participants condemned "the stifling of freedoms" and "the absence of any role for the people." They also chastised the government for sitting idly in the face of abuses of trust by high officials and their acceptance of "bribes and commissions." One writer lamented that "the whole people are living in a great prison!" Another pointedly asked: "how can Syria deal with Camp David when it cannot deal with the problem of bread?" Particularly outspoken was the ʿAlawī poet Mamdūḥ ʿUdwān. "I work," he said, "for an information medium of which I am ashamed because it lies about everything . . . even about the cholera. Why does the regime lie? Lies stem from fear and the regime that lies fears the people, fears that the people will see it as it really is." He also took aim at the Defense Companies, the intelligence agencies, and "the sectarian face" of the ruling power. "I have a question," he went on, "and want it answered now: what are the Defense Companies for ? Why do they enjoy privileges? . . . Why do the people mumble about them under their breath?"[52]

In the view of his opponents, Asad, by allowing various elements to let off steam in this manner, not only sought to feel the pulse of the people but was also playing for time and trying to draw at least some of his clandestine enemies into the open.

Altering the Sectarian Composition of the Baʿth Command and Placing in High-Profile Posts More Sunnīs from Families of High Religious Status

Asad's next step was in the nature of an attempt to alter the public perception of the "sectarian" character of his regime. On January 5, 1980, he induced changes in the makeup of the Baʿth Regional Command. The proportion of Sunnīs at this level of the party leadership was increased from 57.1 percent to 66.7 per-

cent, and that of the ʿAlawīs was decreased from 33.3 percent to 19 percent (Table 19–2). Asad also reorganized the government on January 14 and entrusted it with the task of dealing more stringently with faults or misconduct by officialdom. Technocrats formed as high as 40 percent of the members of the new cabinet—a clear mirroring of Asad's desire to enhance the efficiency of his administration. Moreover, no fewer than one-fourth of the portfolios went to Damascenes who, for the most part, came from old families of high religious standing.[53] The new prime minister—ʿAbd-ur-Raʾūf al-Kasm, a one-time deputy president of Damascus University with a doctoral degree in architecture and city planning from the University of Geneva, and in 1979–1980 the governor of the capital[54]—himself stemmed from a family that had provided a muftī and an arch-ʿālim in the period of the French Mandate.[55] It is reasonable to infer that by these changes Asad also hoped to ingratiate himself further with the Damascene men of religion and to neutralize the capital city, even as a decisive settling of accounts with the Muslim Brethren in their strongholds at Aleppo and Ḥamāh appeared increasingly unavoidable.

Linking the Irreconcilable Militants to the C.I.A. and Taking the Problem by the Horns and Going the Limit

At length in March 1980, as the scale of the unrest widened and strikes and demonstrations—in many towns and cities but not in Damascus—increased in extent and intensity, Asad, roused to a sense of the inextricable dependence of the fate of his regime upon the destruction of the Muslim militants, settled to fight them with grim purpose.

He began by linking, in terms free from ambiguity, the Muslim militants to U.S. policy in the region. "It is the U.S. Central Intelligence," he said on March 11, 1980, "that recruits and provides these agents with the means of death and destruction and directs their activities from centers not far from the Syrian borders." In subsequent statements he maintained that "the U.S. believes that by causing problems of this kind for us, it can force us to yield to Israel's will," and that in point of fact "there is no U.S. policy in this region but an Israeli policy that the U.S. carries out." He also reminded the people how the Muslim Brethren had moved against Egyptian President Gamāl ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir "at the climax of his struggle against imperialism."[56]

The hard-heartedness under Asad's silken exterior now bared itself. The fiercer the attacks by Muslim die-hards, the more merciless was Asad henceforth in his response. By way of justifying his tougher stance, he maintained in late July 1980 that most of the participants in the strikes, including those involved in the fifteen-day shut-down of shops at Aleppo, acted "under pressure and out of fear" and "in more than one city" told emissaries he sent to inquire into their problems: "We thought that the Muslim Brethren are more powerful than the state. If not, then why do they kill and you keep silence? Why do they

destroy and you do nothing? And if you are unable to confront the Muslim Brethren, how do you expect us, defenceless as we are, to defy them?"[57]

Asad conceded that "the Muslim Brethren are not of little weight . . . or an incidental phenomenon in the life of our nation," and that "very many citizens believe that affiliation with them is tantamount to a more rigorous affiliation with Islam."[58] This may explain why he continued for a while to distinguish—as he put it in March 1980—between "those [among them] who kill and the others,"[59] and why, after the attempt on his life on June 26, 1980 and the passage of Law No. 49 of July 7, 1980, which regarded adherence to the Muslim Brethren as "a crime" punishable by death,[60] he gave the nonmilitants one month—subsequently extended to fifty days at the urging of Muslim and Christian men of religion—to renounce their connection with the movement and avoid the prescribed penalty. By August 28, according to an official source, no fewer than 1,052 members of the Brotherhood made their submission.[61] What proportion of its total strength they constituted is difficult to determine, particularly because the society underwent between 1975 and 1982 acute shifts in its numerical weight. For example, on the reckoning of its own leaders, its membership in Aleppo did not exceed 800 in 1975 but had by 1978 swollen to an estimated maximum of 5,000 to 7,000.[62] However, by the spring of 1981 "all its hide-outs" in the city had been uncovered and its branch there had, in an effective sense, ceased to exist.[63]

Anyhow, it is necessary to keep in mind that from March 1980 to February 1982 striking fear in the hearts of opponents became the chief lever of Asad's regime, and the security networks and elite armed formations—the Defense Companies, the Special Forces, and the Third Armored Division—its main instruments. Crackdowns by units of one or another of these formations involved in some instances, according to opposition reports, the sealing off of entire neighborhoods, house-to-house searches, mass arrests, fighting from building to building in narrow alleys, killing prisoners in their cells, shooting noncombatants dragged into the streets from their homes, and at Ḥamāh in 1982 indiscriminate bombardments by artillery and helicopter gunships and the leveling to the ground of whole sections of the northern and eastern parts of the city.

No sure count of the number of dead exists. The regime published figures only on the fatalities among civilian Baʿthists—"more than 200" at Aleppo in 1980 and 146 in February 1982 at Ḥamāh.[64] It also claimed that in Ḥamāh the Muslim Brethren "pounced on our comrades while sleeping in their homes and killed whomever they could kill of women and children, mutilating the bodies of the martyrs in the streets, driven, like mad dogs, by their black hatred."[65]

For their part, the Muslim Brethren reported the killing by the regime's forces of 97 "innocent citizens" in Jiṣr-ish-Shughūr, a town sixty-five miles to the northeast of Latakia, on March 10, 1980; of "more than 700 detainees" at the Palmyra prison on June 27, 1980, on the morrow of the failed attempt on Asad's life; of an unspecified number of people—probably 42—in Aleppo's al-Aḥad market on July 13, 1980; of at least 15 young peasants in Sarmadā, a village in the district of Ḥārem near the frontier with Turkey, on July 25, 1980;

of 86 individuals, "mostly children," in Aleppo's quarter of al-Mashārqah on August 11, 1980; of 35 others in the city's al-Qaṣr garden on the next day; of 120 female "hostages" (mothers and sisters of suspected militants) in Palmyra prison on December 19, 1980; and of 335 residents of Ḥamāh on April 24, 1981.[66] While providing long but incomplete lists of the names of "martyrs" in every affected quarter of the city of Ḥamāh in a detailed account of "the great massacre" of February 1982, the Muslim Brethren did not give an estimate of the total death toll but conveyed the information that their militants reckoned "on the strength of their own observations" and in the light of data furnished "by their special sources, including those in the hospitals" that the forces of the regime lost, from February 2 to 22, 3,412 men killed, and 5,923 wounded.[67] According to Amnesty International, "estimates of the number of dead on all sides ranged from 10,000 to 25,000."[68] The veteran socialist leader and native of Ḥamāh Akram Ḥurānī and the secular opposition parties insisted, however, that through the whole of February no fewer than 25,000 civilians lost their lives.[69]

At present there is no way of verifying the accuracy of any of these figures or determining with assurance why Asad went to such lengths or allowed the on-scene commander—his brother Rif'at—such latitude in suppressing the rebellion at Ḥamāh. If, as the Muslim militants claimed, the losses among the government forces on the very first day of the rebellion—February 2—came to 1,436 dead and 2,150 wounded,[70] this may in part explain Asad's ruthless response. In any case, his opponents taxed him with premeditating the havoc wreaked on lives and material possessions. By making an example of Ḥamāh, Asad and his regime were, in their view, spurred by a desire "to give a lesson to all of Syria's other cities" and to Syrians of "all political tendencies."[71] It is possible that Asad reasoned as Napoleon did when in 1800 he sent one of his generals to put down a rising in the Vendée. Napoleon advised the general "as a salutary example, to burn down two or three large communes [towns], chosen among those whose conduct is worst." Experience, Napoleon added, had taught him that "a spectacularly severe act is, in the conditions you are facing, the most humane method. Only weakness is inhuman." In all likelihood Asad shares Napoleon's view that "a statesman's heart must be in his head" and that "sentiment" should not be allowed to meddle with policy.[72] But if, from Asad's standpoint, bombing defenseless noncombatants and laying waste entire urban districts in the pursuit of Muslim militants—who were themselves far from free of the stain of wantonly savage acts—may have appeared to be politically logical, if not inescapable, the "massacre" at Ḥamāh remains, in a moral sense, a blot upon his career.

However, achieved, the end that Asad had set himself was now served. He broke the will of the Fighting Vanguard, or at least destroyed its military force, and by effectually putting an end to the civil strife that had distracted Syria for six long years, reasserted his sway by a firmer grip than heretofore. In earlier years, he had by skillful manipulation divided the secular opposition parties and, by inducing splits within them and attracting some of the disjoined ele-

ments into his National Progressive Front, had reduced them all to political irrelevance.

Frustrating the Muslim Brethren in Exile

Inasmuch as grass-roots sympathy for Islamic fundamentalism did not fade away, even though many of its natural supporters increasingly questioned the tactics the Fighting Vanguard had used, Asad deemed it necessary before long to turn his attention to the Muslim Brethren living in exile, with a view to forestalling an attempt on their part to infuse new life into the movement. The month of blood at Ḥamāh had weighed heavily upon their minds and led directly or indirectly to the stirring up of old and the kindling of new divisions among them. As early as April 25, 1982, their leaders formally broke with ʿAdnān ʿUqlah of the Fighting Vanguard, who had fled abroad for his life. They accused him of "openly disagreeing with the Brotherhood, thereby giving the enemy many opportunities" and of "mounting a distractful campaign in an attempt to mislead the Muslim masses into the belief that Muslims are at cross purposes."[73] The ensuing exchange of denunciations and counterdenunciations and disputes concerning the leadership of the movement in its new phase may have been instrumental in driving the Brotherhood's chief ideologist, Saʿīd Ḥawwa, to quit the society in disgust in December 1983. He reportedly compared the Syrian Brotherhood at this juncture to "a filthy swamp in which only few clean fish are living."[74]

Asad was not long in perceiving the opportunities that this state of affairs afforded him. It is not entirely clear what steps he took with regard to ʿAdnān ʿUqlah. In one version, after an intercession on his behalf by the Iranian regime of Rūḥullah al-Khumaynī, ʿUqlah made his peace with Asad and "now lives in Syria in comfort."[75] In another version, he was lured homeward "by treachery," and "it is not known whether he is a martyr or a prisoner."[76] But it is beyond dispute that in the course of 1984—apparently after ʿUqlah's return to Syria—Major General ʿAlī Dūbā, Asad's chief of military intelligence, established contacts in West Germany with "the leadership" of the Fighting Vanguard—most probably with some of ʿUqlah's aides.[77] "During these contacts," read a statement published by the regime on January 25, 1985, "this leadership expressed new convictions by its elements," which in substance allegedly involved an admission by them that "those trading in the name of religion whom they closely knew are implementing suspect schemes that will only reap . . . failure." The state, the statement went on, decided to allow "all faithful youths" to return home and "resume their normal life among their brothers and kinfolk." They were also granted a "special pardon" by Asad, which "will be applicable" to all who would follow their example and abandon the "criminal" ideas "dictated to them by sick minds" or by men with "stained hands."[78]

Asad also succeeded in getting representatives of the faction within the Brotherhood recognized by the international parent body to meet with ʿAlī

Dūbā in Frankfurt on December 11, 1984. However, the talks were broken off the next day. Even though they were taken up again in 1987, their only tangible effect was to deepen or exacerbate a mutual distrust that had developed between two groups within this faction, which had its roots in a conflict over the leadership of the organization. By April 1986 the two groups had turned openly against each other and become in effect two Brotherhoods. One had its base in Iraq and was led by ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn who, according to his own account, resolutely opposed any negotiations with the Asad regime which, as he put it, merely desired the Muslim Brethren to "live in its shadow."[79] The other group, which had Saʿudī connections and secured the support of the international Brotherhood, was headed by Shaykh ʿAbd-ul-Fattāḥ Abū Ghuddah. It declared that from its standpoint, "dialogue is a basic means by which ends may be attained" and that it had decided to opt for it, while cognizant of "the possible negative implications," if for no other reason than to meet "its obligations toward the sons of Syria who are living through all forms of hardships."[80] In the course of the 1984 talks its representatives demanded in essence an end to martial law, "freedom for the Syrian people," and the release of political prisoners. Their interlocutors on the government side "scoffed at them and said: ʿyou are not the victors or General Gouraud to speak in such a fashion. . . ."[81] On this note the talks ended. The 1987 dialogue also came to a standstill.

Asad paid little attention to the group centered at Aachen, linked to the Brotherhood's old leader ʿIṣām al-ʿAṭṭār. This is perhaps attributable to its state of decline. Despite the slaying of his wife in cold blood in that city on March 17, 1981 in a venting of hatred of which he was the real object—but of which the regime professed innocence—his sister, Dr. Najāḥ al-ʿAṭṭār, has continued to hold the post of minister of culture to this very day. This had led his critics to wonder how he could influence popular opinion when he seemed unable to change the mind of a member of his own family. He himself bemoaned the continued presence of his sister in Asad's cabinet as "a family tragedy."[82]

In the hope of ending the "artificial differences between Arabism and Islam" and focusing efforts on "the overthrow of the regime," a faction of the Muslim Brethren in exile—that of ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn—formed on March 11, 1982, jointly with elements of the nationalist opposition living abroad, the National Alliance for the Liberation of Syria.[83] Expanded somewhat to include other malcontents on February 23, 1990, and renamed the National Front for the Salvation of Syria,"[84] the alliance made some noise abroad but, though attuned to the grievances of the people, scarcely gathered force and had little, if any, impact on events at home.

It is significant that although Syria's Islamist factions are still proscribed, Asad has been maintaining since the early 1990s amicable relations with the Islamic Resistance Movement, Ḥamās, an offshoot of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. By way of explanation, he argued that "different forces . . . with different views . . . can, under shared conditions, cooperate," adding that Ḥamās (and Lebanon's Ḥizbullah), unlike other Islamists, "fight against the occupation . . . and in defense of their homeland."[85]

More Firmly in the Saddle than Ever

After the bloodletting of 1982 at Ḥamāh and the succession crisis of 1983–1984—which is analyzed in Chapter 18—Asad faced no potent opposition. He had turned round his finger, outwitted, divided, marginalized, silenced, or crushed all rival or opposition forces. His hold on power was now more secure than at any time since he seized the helm in 1970, indeed so secure that he decided to open up his system, but to a degree that did not jeopardize his grip on the state. He thus gave private business an increasingly larger role in the country's economy from the middle 1980s onwards but without undermining development planning or the public sector.[86] In 1990 he ordered the adoption of measures aimed at abrogating—except in regard to offences against "the security of the state"—the martial or emergency law regulations that had been in effect since the middle 1960s and that had invested the martial-law governor and, ultimately, the president of the Republic with far-reaching exceptional powers.[87] He also pardoned between December 1991 and December 1995 no fewer than 5,493 political prisoners, largely members or supporters of the Muslim Brethren, but kept the die-hards or the more dangerous of his enemies under lock and key.[88] Moreover, he allowed nonparty or independent elements—mostly members of the professions or businessmen or religious shaykhs, and even some traditional tribal leaders—a greater voice in the People's Assembly.[89] In 1973–1977 these elements occupied 62 out of the assembly's 186 seats, or 33.3 percent of the total.[90] By the sessions of 1986–1989 their representation had dropped to 17.9 percent but rose to 33.6 percent in 1990 and 33.2 percent in 1994.[91]

Asad never regained the popular affection that he had enjoyed in 1970–1971, when crowds, even at Ḥamāh and Aleppo, carried him and his car exultantly on their shoulders. But the regime bore now more and more the imprint of his personality. The aspects of his character bearing on the exercise of authority, also became more closely interwoven with the texture of internal events. Although unchallenged as Syria's ruler, however, his power has been susceptible to certain natural limits. It is thus inconceivable that he should be day-in and day-out fully aware of all that goes on in every subdivision of the regime or of the country, if only because of his tendency to be reclusive and to allow officials under him no little latitude in affairs that he does not deem to be critical. Moreover, his power is to some extent diminished by his relative lack of interest in—or insufficient knowledge of—economic problems or other issues of a technical nature. The complexity of such problems inevitably give specialists or experts some influence on the making of policy in the relevant areas.

A subtle process that tends to buttress Asad's position arises from a general belief that in ability he is head and shoulders above any of his aides, and that should anything happen to him, none in—or outside of—his entourage has the stature or the clout, or commands the loyalty of the crucial armed formations, necessary to hold the regime or the country together. To put it differently, a

significant factor redounding in his favor is a widely shared fear that his death could, under the existing circumstances, be a source of grave trouble for Syria and its people.

In discussing Asad's success in weathering the Islamist storm and keeping the more crucial reins in his hand, emphasis has been laid in this chapter on Asad's personal qualities, especially his talent for statecraft and his skill in devising or adapting means to ends. But it is necessary to bear in mind that the organizations that he built or remolded and earmarked for the defense of his regime, such as the security or intelligence networks and the politically relevant armed units, solidified or imparted durability to his power and, ultimately, assured that things shaped at home the course he desired or could tolerate.

CHAPTER 23

Asad's Main Concepts at the Level of Regional Politics: Ends or Instruments?

It is not easy to identify the basic components of Asad's regional outlook. He is very skillful at concealing his real thoughts, and there is often no connection between his private views and his public words, or between the ideals he asserts and the policies he pursues. It is indeed tempting to say that on the whole his motives do not stem from an ideological foundation, and that pragmatism forms the warp and woof of his mind and conduct. In other words, he appears to rate ideas in terms of their political utility. In any case, more is known about his means than about his ends, and his ends tend to be disclosed only when they are realized.

Asad and Pan-Arabism

Is Asad a pan-Arab? Or is he a pan-Syrian? Or are pan-Arabism and pan-Syrianism coupled together in his mind? Or are they to him mere phrases and unreflective of his real sentiments? Does he consecrate his time and efforts to such long-range objectives, or does he manipulate these abstractions and the feelings behind them for sheer instrumental purposes? Is his sole concern to safeguard and expand his power and to control or influence as much of his regional environment as is practicable?

In a relatively recent meeting with an American magazine team, Asad asserted that the Syrians and Lebanese are "one people," that "there is not one Lebanese family that does not have a branch in Syria," that the Maronites had their origins in Syria and not in Lebanon, that their patron saint—Saint Maron—had been buried in ar-Rastan, a town in central Syria, and that at the 1919 peace conference "President Wilson did not say the Syrians sought to establish Greater Syria" but "said Syria should not be divided." At the same time, Asad denied that there is any intention on the part of Syria to "annex Lebanon" or "build a Greater Syria." "Our ambition," he added, "is to achieve the unity of all Arabs."[1] This is a recurring theme in his major speeches. For example, in 1970, shortly after he took the helm, he publicly committed his party "to strive for the realization of unitary steps with progressive Arab states."[2] In 1980 he gave emphasis to "the unshakableness of our orientation toward Arab unity."[3] In a 1989 speech his pan-Arab note was more intense. "Arab unity," he affirmed, "is not a transient issue or a tactical ploy or a seasonal theme" but "a necessity

of life." Bringing it about would be "a fulfillment of ourselves and our identity." He went on, "so long as we remain in an anomalous divided condition, our problems will keep multiplying, just as a patient goes on suffering as long as he does not free himself of his disease."[4]

Do these sentiments harmonize with Asad's actual conduct? In this regard the historical evidence is ambiguous and indefinite.

His adherence to the Latakia branch of the Baʿth Party in 1946 may conceivably be interpreted as a commitment to pan-Arabism. At that time, however, the branch in question, whose leading core consisted largely of ʿAlawī elements, also stood for other ideals, such as the social emancipation of the peasants and the placing of ʿAlawīs and members of other minority sects on a par with all other citizens.[5] It is thus not easy to determine how significant a factor was the feeling for pan-Arabism in Asad's gravitation toward the party.

The problem of motive is more complex in regard to Asad's next major political act—his adherence to the clandestine Military Committee, which was founded in Cairo in 1959.[6] This act can be construed as bearing anti-unionist connotations. At least it spelled defiance to the only unity regime in modern Arab history, that of the United Arab Republic, which combined Egypt and Syria between 1958 and 1961. But it may be argued that the related activities of Asad and his associates were directed against ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir and his regime rather than against the interests of pan-Arabism. In practice at that historical juncture it was not possible to oppose ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir, however, without doing injury to the pan-Arab cause, inasmuch as in the eyes of vast numbers of Syrians and other Arabs, ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir personified the ideal of unity. To be sure, Asad and the other members of the Military Committee had cause to be aggrieved. ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir had marginalized the officer-Baʿthists and excluded them from any real influence within the armed forces, transferring—in effect exiling—most of them to Egypt.[7] They had expected the unity regime to rest on a genuine partnership between the Baʿthists and ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir but beheld it rapidly developing into a one-man show, and found themselves deprived of their freedom to watch over their own interests.[8] They did not, it is true, make open war upon the United Arab Republic, but their secret activities within the Syrian officer corps could scarcely have had the effect of shoring it up or enhancing its prospects.

A quarter of a century later, Asad would leave the impression in an interview that a main concern of the Military Committee was to safeguard the Egyptian-Syrian union.[9] This cannot be reconciled with the version of the committee's original objectives given in 1969 by Sāmī aj-Jundī, who was a cousin of one of its founders and kept close contact between 1961 and 1963 with Muḥammad ʿUmrān, its chief figure. According to Jundī, the committee aimed not only at reconstituting the Baʿth party or getting rid of its traditional leaders but also at withholding cooperation, "unless necessitated by the circumstances of a given phase," from any of the elements that cooperated with the unity regime.[10]

Although it is not possible to be emphatic as to which of the two versions is more reliable, Jundī's account appears to have more evidential value when con-

sidered in the light of the Military Committee's attitude toward the 1963 project to federate Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. By then the United Arab Republic had broken up, the Secessionist Regime of 1961–1963 had been overthrown, the Baʿthists had taken the power in Baghdad, and mounting popular pressure in Syria had forced the factious—Baʿthist, Nāṣirite, and independent nationalist—government, which the military coup of March 8, 1963 produced, to enter hurriedly into "unity" talks with Cairo. The Military Committee now held the crucial threads in the armed forces and formed to all intents and purposes the real heart of the Syrian regime. The course that it steered in the few eventful months after the coup leaves little doubt that, far from hankering after unity, the committee was dead set against any genuine constitutional link with ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir or any diminution of its new power. From the beginning it showed little interest in the March-April tripartite union negotiations: only one of its members, Muḥammad ʿUmrān, went once to Cairo, and essentially in the capacity of an observer.[11] Scarcely had the negotiations ended and the April 17 declaration of intent to federate the three countries been signed, when the committee instituted a purge in the armed forces that was to embrace all of ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir's supporters, thus wrecking the pact in the very week it was concluded.[12]

Neither ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir nor the Syrian negotiators knew as yet of the existence of the Military Committee. In the first round of negotiations the Egyptian leader had wondered: "Who runs Syria?" When he got only vague answers, he added: "Will I be dealing with ghosts?"[13] He was then given the names of the members of the Revolutionary Command Council, who in their majority unwittingly fronted for the Military Committee.

The committee's behavior may have been prompted in part by ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir's own open aversion to casting in his lot with the Baʿthists and by the anti-Baʿth animus of the vast crowds in such cities as Damascus and Aleppo, whose unrestrained energies he effortlessly evoked. It is also conceivable that Asad, having only one voice in the committee, was not fully behind its course of action. But for this, incontrovertible evidence is unattainable.

Even after his achievement of undivided power in 1970 and ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir's death in the same year, Asad's line of conduct, as far as the issue of unity was concerned, while deviating markedly in form and style, did not differ much in substance from that of the committee. He did take steps toward "unitary" arrangements in 1971 with Egypt and Libya, in 1975–1976 with Jordan, in 1976 with Egypt, in 1977 with Egypt and the Sudan, in 1978–1979 with Iraq, and in 1980 with Libya, but the arrangements were of the loosest kind and did not involve any sacrifice or limitation of his power. In this regard it is instructive that, before appending his signature to the 1971 union agreement, Asad turned to the Libyan leader Muʿammar Qaḍḍāfī and plainly asked him to "bear in mind one basic thing: the force that is in Syria is the Baʿth and we shall not permit the rise of other forces." "I have," he went on, "ten thousand Baʿthists inside the army and I say this now, before signing the pact, so that you would not say afterwards that Asad wrecked the federation."[14] The Egyptian leadership, for its part, had no wish for anything more than a coordination of policies,

particularly in the realm of defense. Indeed, the contemplated arrangement was in essence a union between the heads of the three constituent republics and was to rest on their unanimous consent.[15] The same principle formed the basis of the Syria-Egypt Unified Political Command of 1976–1977, the Joint Syria-Iraq Supreme Political Authority set up in 1978,[16] and the related Joint Political Command of 1979.[17] At bottom none of the Arab leaders caught up in the drive to unity was willing to part with his freedom of action.

Eventually all the attempts at integration, including that of 1980 with Libya—which was in the nature of a fantasy—came to naught. Egypt's separate peace accord with Israel reduced the 1971 and 1976–1977 arrangements to tatters. The ensuing moves toward union with Iraq were not hampered by the long-drawn-out dissensions over the distribution of the Euphrates waters, or over the oil price and transit fees, or the cutting off of Iraqi oil. Indeed these problems were before long cleared up, and Iraq resumed pumping its crude oil to Syria's oil refineries and its terminals on the Mediterranean.[18] "The Iraqis," said in December 1978 Ṣaddām Ḥusayn—who was by this time the real moving force in Iraq's regime but would not succeed the ailing President Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr until July 16, 1979—"are ready to sacrifice blood and money . . . to build [the unified] state."[19] A more serious obstacle was Ṣaddām's insistence on unifying *first* the Iraqi and Syrian wings of the Baʿth party, which had been entangled in a virulent feud for upwards of a decade, and recognizing its founder Michel ʿAflaq—who was in exile in Baghdad and had been sentenced to death by Syria—as its authentic and legitimate leader.[20] There were also rumors circulating at the time in Damascus to the effect that the Syrian regime had refused to allow the units crucial to its security—the Special Forces and the Defense Companies—to come under the projected unified military command.[21]

Be that as it may, the unity plans with Iraq collapsed in the wake of the reported detection by Baghdād of a "vile conspiracy" by "a handful of men" who had "infiltrated" the ruling Revolutionary Command Council and the Baʿth Party Command. At an emergency session of the top leadership called by Ṣaddām Ḥusayn on July 19, 1979, one of the "conspirators," Muḥyī ʿAbd-ul-Ḥusayn al-Mashhadī—a Shīʿī from al-Karkh district of Baghdād, a former trade unionist, a Baʿthist since 1958, and the secretary general of the Command Council—"confessed" that he and four other members of the Baʿth Command[22] belonged to a group that had been formed in 1975, that the group maintained contact with Syria and received financial help from its leadership, that their "liaison officer" with Damascus was Muḥammad ʿĀyesh—a Sunnī from the Anbār province and a former president of the General Federation of Trade Unions—and that Ghānim ʿAbd-ul-Jalīl, the (Shīʿī) head of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn's personal bureau, furnished Syria with condensed versions of all incoming reports, thus giving it access to the Iraq regime's innermost secrets. Among those executed in the crackdown that followed was the commander of the Fifth Army Corps, General Walīd Maḥmūd Sirt, a Sunnī Turkoman who allegedly had links with the "conspiring" group and was most probably the heart of the anti-Ṣaddām tendencies within the regime. It is necessary to add that al-Mashhadī

had fallen under Ṣaddām's watchful eyes since July 11 when, at a meeting of the Revolutionary Command Council, he could not suppress his uneasiness about Bakr's decision to withdraw from the presidency, and insistently pressed him to reconsider the matter and, if need be, take rest for a time, without surrendering the reins of government. He also moved that the vote on this issue be unanimous. But he could not dissuade Bakr from his resolve.[23]

When details of the "plot" were made public on July 28, 1979, Baghdad made no mention of Syria but referred to the involvement of "an external side which it would not be in the national interest to identify." But soon news agencies were pointing to Syria as the country implicated in the affair. On being apprised of the reports Asad, according to an internal Syrian Baʿth party circular, called Ṣaddām Ḥusayn and assured him that the references to Syria were "utterly unfounded" and, through a high-level delegation that he subsequently sent to Baghdad, undertook to "inflict a signal punishment on anyone, no matter how high his rank in the party or the government," if a properly conducted inquiry would yield "solid evidence of his complicity." But from the particulars provided to the delegation "it became clear that the whole thing was nothing more than clumsy theatrics." Asad next appealed to Ṣaddām to "put marginal disputes behind us" and concentrate "all efforts" on reinforcing the front against Israel. He also proposed the formation of a committee of enquiry with members from the commands of the two wings of the party or, if more agreeable, from non-Syrian and non-Iraqi Baʿthists. But Ṣaddām remained unmoved and gave the Syrians to understand that he was convinced that they were "deep in the plot" and that his conviction was "not open to argument."[24] However, he did not cut off the flow of economic aid to Syria, which Iraq had pledged to provide at the Baghdad Arab Summit of November 1978, until after the outbreak in September 1980 of the Iraq-Iran war, when Asad openly—but within bounds—supported Iran's military effort.[25]

Asad and the Iraq-Iran War

At first view, Asad's help to non-Arab Iran against Arab Iraq appears to call into question his pan-Arab credentials. But in a public justification of his policy, he proceeded from strictly pan-Arab premises. He drew contrasts between the Shah's Iran, which dwelt on its "Persianism" and was in league with Israel, and revolutionary Iran, which "has taken the side of the Arabs in their struggle to recover their occupied lands" and gives emphasis to its Islamic identity and, therefore, to the element in its heritage that "binds it to the history of the Arab nation." Did it make sense, Asad wondered, to "dissipate this great gain" and turn "Islamic Iran with its human, military, and economic capabilities . . . into another Israel on the eastern borders of the Arab homeland?" An "objective analysis of the current war," he went on, would make clear that "it is in essence a war against the Arabs . . . and at their expense."[26]

Indeed, the war tangibly reduced Arab potentialities and brought great harm

to both the Iraqi and Iranian peoples. On the other hand, it is necessary to call to mind that before the Iraq-Iran Algiers accord of 1975, and in a period marked by the not-so-secret entente between the Shah and Israel to keep radical Iraq as weak and as tied down in Kurdistan as possible for as long as possible, Asad sought good relations with the Shah and in May 1974 obtained a $150 million loan from his regime, free of interest.[27]

Moreover, a quite different light is thrown on Asad's possible motives by an "extremely secret" Syrian Baʿth party report drawn up in March 1981, apparently with a view to allaying apprehensions among the party cadres about Asad's policy. "Comrades," the report began,

> there has been much discussion of late about the gravity of cooperating with the Iranian republic . . . and the extremely dangerous consequences, not only to the party but to Syria itself, of a collapse of the present regime in Baghdad inasmuch as our eastern borders would, in such eventuality, be susceptible to the penetration of the reactionary trend prevalent in Iran. . . . There have been calls on the part of the comrades for a review of our position. . . . It is hence necessary to bring into relief . . . the facts noted below:
>
> . . . We are not so ingenuous as to permit the fall of the Baʿth regime in Iraq or to have common borders with a regime that would be an adjunct of the Iranian reaction. . . . Our policy . . . is not directed against the nationalist and progressive gains achieved in the Iraqi region but only at rooting out the Takrītī band that has forsaken the principles of the party and its nationalist line.
>
> American intelligence and the men of Savak embroiled the Ṣaddām regime in its war with Iran . . . by feeding it with false information about the conditions of Iran's armed forces.[28] We had prior and full knowledge of the Iraqi plan of invasion . . . [thanks to] our own special sources. We let things take their natural course because the war was not against our interests but on the contrary served our objectives to a considerable extent . . . by paralyzing Ṣaddām's army, exposing him as a weak and unsuccessful leader and baring his unrevolutionary nature and his suspicious ties with American imperialism and Arab reaction. The war also demonstrated . . . the correctness of our assessment of the dangers of his individualistic propensities not only for Iraq but for the region in its entirety. . . .
>
> Our policy will not suffer from the prolongation of the war which could only weaken the two contending sides and would either lead to the fall of Ṣaddām's renegade regime and its replacement by a system . . . supported by Iraq's Nationalist Front, which embraces all the progressive and revolutionary elements in the country, or would enfeeble Ṣaddām enough to bring him back to his senses . . . and force him to abandon his private ambitions and avoid wandering away again from the progressive revolutionary line of the party.
>
> The decision that the party recently took to allow the repumping of Iraqi oil [across Syrian territory] accords with this policy.[29] Apart from the gains that it will bring to Syria's treasury, it will help Iraq materially and, by enabling it to procure more arms, will contribute to enhancing its fighting capacity and prolonging the war to a degree that will facilitate the replacement of Ṣaddām and simultaneously bring the reactionary Iranian advance to a halt."[30]

It is possible, of course, that this "extremely secret" report did not reflect the real motives behind Asad's alliance with Iran but merely what he wanted the Baʿth party cadres to believe he had in view. Be that as it may, the report lends itself to the inference that, as far as the Iraq-Iran war was concerned, the pan-Arab framework provided no more than the public or formal explanation of his policy, whereas in effect he was practising sheer power politics.

Similarly, his recurring efforts to influence, manipulate, or control the smaller neighboring front-line states facing Israel—namely, Jordan and Lebanon—or the non-governmental forces within these states—the Palestine resistance movement and the Lebanese secular or sectarian parties or militias—were invariably rationalized or justified in terms of the identity of pan-Arab interests and the interests of Syria's regime.

It does not necessarily follow, however, that he is not genuinely interested in bringing about an effective coordination of Arab efforts, at least vis-à-vis Israel. For him to be thus concerned accords at bottom with a balance-of-power interpretation of his behavior.

The Conflict with Israel and the Concept of Strategic Parity

From Asad's standpoint, the struggle with Israel is "a struggle of existence" with "a fierce enemy," which is adept at "deceiving world opinion" and dignifies its usurpation of Arab lands with the impress of "a divine judgment"—a struggle that "dominates all of our interests" and constitutes "our major worry."[31]

The falling away of Egypt from this struggle in 1978 spurred Asad to put forward the concept of "strategic parity" with Israel as a fundamental guiding principle for Syria's course of conduct. With this concept he linked the thesis of "self-reliance," or ultimate dependence on his country's own power, in the wake of the collapse of the "unity" talks with Iraq in 1979 and his realization of the difficulty of achieving the necessary degree of Arab solidarity or combined strength. In pursuit of his new concept, and driven by a rising sense of Syria's regional isolation and Washington's disregard of his concerns, he concluded in October 1980 a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union.

Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights in 1981, its invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the U.S.-Israel Strategic Cooperation Agreements of 1981 and 1983, the enhancement to unprecedented levels of Israel's military machine by the United States under the Reagan Administration (1981–1989), and the continued American commitment to assure Israel a "qualitative edge" over the Arabs in military technology—all these factors had the cumulative effect of firmly anchoring the concept of "strategic parity" with Israel in Asad's structure of thought. He defined it in "comprehensive" terms as involving an adjustment of power in the military, economic, social, and cultural spheres of life. He also viewed it as a long-range aim and as a way toward avoiding "capitulation" and ultimately securing a "just" and, therefore, enduring peace. He was not unaware of—and had to tackle—the dilemma inherent in the concept: a rise in expenditures aimed at the build-up of armed strength reduces the resources available for the

other no less critical correlative purposes. In any case, the process of realizing or approximating the concept in fact would preoccupy Asad throughout the 1980s.

The end of the cold war, however, the breakup of the Soviet Union, the sharp reduction in Syria's access to technologically advanced weapons, and the serious impairment of Iraq's military capability in the Gulf War appear to detract from the viability of Asad's concept, at least in the foreseeable future. Despite his participation in the alliance against Iraq, the Gulf War had, from his viewpoint, "far-reaching" adverse effects for all the Arabs. To use his own words, they "lost a great deal and Israel gained a great deal, militarily, politically, and economically, so much so that it appears as if what happened had been planned and carried out in Israel's interests." In the light of these circumstances and the unsettling impact not only of the radical change in the international balance of power but also of the 1996 military alliance between Turkey and Israel, Asad is now reemphasizing the need for a "unity of ranks, unity of bearings, and unity of action in the Arab arena." He has also allowed himself to be involved, even if warily, in the U.S.-brokered peace process with Israel.[32]

CHAPTER 24

An In-depth Study of Asad's Relations with Fatḥ and the P.L.O. from 1966 to 1997 and the Light It Sheds on His Aims and Techniques

Asad's relations with Fatḥ, that is, with the mainstream element of the P.L.O., have been chosen for intensive examination not only because of their significance or because the history of Fatḥ came at various points to be intimately connected with the history of Syria's smaller neighbors, Jordan and Lebanon, but also by reason of the access of this writer to the P.L.O.'s files on its relations with Syria's regime and the chance he had to discuss the relevant issues with several of Fatḥ's key leaders. To be sure, the P.L.O. sources by themselves, while helpful, cannot serve as an adequate basis for an unflawed critical appraisal of Asad's actions and policies. For this it would be necessary to tap Syria's internal records, which, of course, are inaccessible. But it is hoped that this detailed study will make more intelligible or cast some light on Asad's characteristics, course of conduct, and the methods he is prone to apply toward the furtherance of his aims.

The First Spell of Fatḥ-Baʿth Cooperation

Fatḥ had its beginnings in 1956 during the temporary occupation of the Gaza Strip by Israeli forces.[1] For the next several years it consisted of loosely interconnected underground cells or clandestine circles, and sought to win over Palestinians of all political leanings, at home and in the diaspora, to the idea of "armed struggle" against Israel. It was not formally organized until 1959[2] or 1960[3] or, perhaps, 1963.[4] In any case, it took off in earnest only in 1964 and was increasingly driven, particularly after 1967, by a resurgent Palestinian nationalism.

From 1964 to 1966 there was close cooperation between Fatḥ and Syria's Baʿth regime. In the words of Abū-l-Luṭf, a founder of Fatḥ and an ex-Baʿthist, Syria was in those years "an essential support base for our movement."[5] Acting "not so much of its own accord but to accommodate a strong current of feeling in favor of the fedayeen (the Palestinian commandos) among army officers and Baʿth party members,"[6] the Baʿth government acquiesced in the establishment of training camps for Fatḥ's fighters and provided them with repositories for their arms and supplies. It also gave Fatḥ's leaders much autonomy but not free rein: it facilitated raids by their commandos from Lebanon and Jordan but, with few exceptions, denied them access to Israel through the Golan. At one point, in

1965, Asad, then commander of the Air Force, permitted the transfer to them of a cargo of arms sent by air from Algeria. But their "primary contact" at that time was the military intelligence chief, General Aḥmad Suwaydānī.[7]

"The Affair of Yūsuf ʿUrābī"

This first spell of Fatḥ-Baʿth collaboration was abruptly broken by what Abū Iyād called "the affair of Yūsuf ʿUrābī." A Palestinian captain in the Syrian army and a supporter of the Baʿth party, ʿUrābī fell on May 5, 1966, in a deadly shoot-out under circumstances that cannot as yet be fully ascertained. On the same day all the members of the Fatḥ command living in Damascus, including Yāser ʿArafāt and his military aide Abū Jihād (Khalīl al-Wazīr), were thrown into prison. The order for their incarceration came from Asad personally. Having lent his support a few months earlier—on February 23—to the military coup pulled by Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, Asad was now, as defense minister, close to the summit of power.

The real role of Yūsuf ʿUrābī is still wrapped in obscurity. According to Abū Iyād, he was "a protégé of Asad" and joined al-ʿĀṣifah, Fatḥ's military wing, to advance Asad's purposes.[8] However, Abū Jihād felt that ʿUrābī, while "loyal to the Syrian army," was "also a good friend" of Fatḥ. He and ʿArafāt shared the belief that the whole affair was a distinct sequel of an earlier attempt by Jadīd and Asad to bring the military activities of Fatḥ under their control. The attempt was made shortly after their 1966 coup but, preferring as they did the indirect approach, they worked through Aḥmad Jibrīl, whom Fatḥ's leaders regarded as an instrument of Syria's military intelligence. Jibrīl came to ʿArafāt with an offer to unite his Palestine Liberation Front, a diminutive group, with Fatḥ. ʿArafāt raised no objection. Eventually an accord on the terms of the merger was hammered, out but was never put into practice because Jibrīl insisted on possessing the military command.

In ʿArafāt's view, his refusal to accede to Jibrīl's demand prompted Jibrīl's masters to plot against his life. From the succeeding series of events ʿArafāt inferred that the idea of the plotters was to use the unsuspecting Yūsuf ʿUrābī—in the guise of an intermediary in the dispute—to entice ʿArafāt to a meeting in the ʿAsākir district of Damascus at which he would be put out of the way. Things did not turn out as the plotters had desired. ʿArafāt did not put in an appearance but sent an emissary with a bodyguard who, under orders, kept in the shadows. The presumed killer—ʿAdnān al-ʿĀlim, a Palestinian officer in the Syrian army[9]—acting under the apparent misapprehension that ʿUrābī had given the plot away, shot both ʿUrabī and ʿArafāt's emissary.[10]

Be that as it may, on learning of the arrest of ʿArafāt and his aides, Abū Iyād, who was in Kuwait, left for Damascus in quest of his comrades' freedom. He was accompanied by two other Fatḥ leaders.[11] "Every official of importance we met in Syria" Abū Iyād recounted,

referred us to the defense minister, Ḥāfiz al-Asad, who, after much effort on our part, agreed to see us. There was a note of hostility in the terms in which he addressed us. During our three-hour-long conversation with him we were struck by his intense hatred for Abū ʿAmmār [ʿArafāt]. He accused him of being an agent of Egyptian Intelligence and charged him with the murder of Yūsuf ʿUrābī. He also characterized Fatḥ as a mysterious parochial organization with a membership consisting mostly of Muslim Brethren or turncoat Baʿthists. He asked us many questions about our ideas and aims. In the end, despite the reservations he expressed concerning Abū ʿAmmār and Fatḥ, he agreed to set him free provided he would leave Syria.[12]

From the 1967 Arab Defeat to the Jordanian Crisis of 1970–1971

After the 1967 war there was a certain shift in Asad's attitude toward Fatḥ. Although Ṣalāḥ Jadīd desired to play for safety, at least until the Syrian forces could be reconstituted, and therefore forbad the use of Syria for guerrilla initiatives against Israel, Asad, by contrast, was—to quote Abū Iyād—"alone, strangely enough, in encouraging us to remain active." This finds support in a 1980 letter from ʿArafāt to Asad. "I shall never forget," wrote ʿArafāt, "how, after the war of June 1967, . . . our eminent brother Abū Sulaymān[13] infused new vigor in us . . . and, despite all the objections emanating from here and there, gave us some arms and personally directed us to persevere in our course."[14] Abū Iyād could not account with any certainty for the change in Asad's stance. "But," he added, "it was difficult not to sense then that Asad had his own special agenda in Syria."[15] His conciliatory move toward Fatḥ may have been related to his incipient rivalry with Jadīd and the formation by the latter in 1967 of a Baʿthist Palestinian commando force, aṣ-Ṣāʿiqah.

At any rate, Fatḥ's leaders, taking full account of the new postwar regional realities and with an eye to loosening Syria's tight grip on them, decided to shift their control apparatus and much of their effort to Jordan. In the ensuing few years their movement grew markedly in strength and prestige. A number of factors contributed to this—among others, the entente they reached with ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir in November 1967 and the hold they gained in 1969 upon the Palestine Liberation Organization, which had been created in 1964 by the Arab League. The battle of Karāmeh, a refugee town four miles or so east of the River Jordan, in which on March 21, 1968, fewer than three hundred guerrillas valiantly resisted—alone for six hours and then with the help of Jordanian artillery—a large Israeli armored force supported by aircraft, had also a considerable psychological impact and deepened Fatḥ's support among the Palestinian people. Indeed, before long the P.L.O., which Fatḥ now led, seemed, to the disquiet of King Ḥusayn, to be evolving into a state within a state.

Sensing that his regime could be thrown out of equilibrium by the incipient condition of dual power, the king at first marked time and made a show of maintaining a delicate balance between the guerrillas and his ill-humored gen-

erals. But on September 15, 1970, fully prepared and possibly encouraged, if not pressured, by the Nixon administration, which tended to see Russians "behind every sand dune in the Middle East,"[16] King Ḥusayn, struck, making the most of the hijacking by radical guerrillas of four Western airliners. Bent on destroying the resistance at a minimal cost to their troops, his generals avoided using infantry in close combat and fought the guerrillas by saturation shelling. The destruction of life wrought in the refugee camps was described by a European eyewitness as "sheer butchery."[17] "In almost a quarter of a century of foreign reporting, I cannot recall anything remotely similar to what I have seen in Jordan," wrote Arnaud de Borchgrave of *Newsweek*, who had witnessed "inter-tribal massacres in Africa, . . . the slow blood-letting in Vietnam, . . . and the smashing [by the Russians] of the Hungarian revolt in 1956."[18] An estimate cited by a Norwegian spokesman for Save the Children Fund put the number of killed in the ten days of fighting at between 3,000 and 4,000, the wounded at some 10,000, and the homeless at 50,000.[19]

As early as September 2, 1970, when the confrontation between King Ḥusayn and the guerrillas appeared imminent, Syria's Baʿth party, responding to an appeal for help by ʿArafāt, openly warned that "Syria cannot remain idle toward attempts to liquidate the Palestinian revolution" and placed "all of Syria's potential" at the disposal of the Resistance.[20] It is not known whether this warning was issued with the approval of Asad, who was then still contending for power with the party's civilian wing.

There is also some uncertainty about his role during the crisis. What is beyond dispute is that on September 18 Syrian tanks bearing the symbols of the Palestine Liberation Army crossed into Jordan, took Irbid, eight miles from the border, the next day, supplied the fedayeen in the surrounding region, and on September 23, after an encounter with Jordanian armor, pulled back at the urging of President ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir and the Soviet government and under the threat of an American or Israeli military reaction. Despite the use of aircraft by Jordan during the encounter, Syria's air force, on Asad's orders, refrained from combat. Later he would explain that he wanted to "prevent escalation." He would also affirm that the armored incursion into the Irbid region was made with his consent but that he merely aimed at safeguarding the fedayeen from slaughter and assisting in the creation of a security zone for them in northern Jordan.[21]

The Jadīd faction, however, would accuse Asad of "aborting the decision of the Party Command to protect the Resistance."[22] Moreover, Abū Iyād of Fatḥ would have reason to believe that during the crisis Asad apprised King Ḥusayn by roundabout means of his disapproval of the Syrian armed intervention.[23] This finds support, if inconclusive, in remarks by "State Department officials who were in the Middle East at the time" to the effect that "it was . . . known in select diplomatic and intelligence circles that Asad had been in indirect communication with Waṣfī-t-Tall [then a close aide of the king and subsequently his prime minister] and had reassured Ḥusayn in advance that the Syrian Air Force would not retaliate against Jordan's air force."[24]

The ambiguity in Asad's role during the guerrillas' Jordan ordeal did not

immediately affect his relations with Fatḥ. "In the interval between the September events and his seizure of full power—on November 13, 1970, and for a few months afterward," Abū Iyād recalled, "Asad was very amiable in his dealings with us, attending to our needs and conveying the impression of being against interference in our internal affairs. He also alluded to his intention to dissolve aṣ-Ṣāʿiqah and professed to be in favor of Fatḥ's being alone and without rivals in the Palestinian arena."[25] In the same period Asad did not hinder the movement into the ʿArqūb, a Lebanese region below the slopes of Mount Hermon, of guerrillas who had retreated from Jordan.

In the early part of 1971, however, Fatḥ abruptly found itself hedged with restrictions. Its political activities in Syria were curtailed. Recruitment of Syrians in its ranks was forbidden. The liberty of movement of its fedayeen or other P.L.O. forces through the country was severely limited. Arms for their use, which Algeria had shipped by way of the port of Latakia, were blocked. Simultaneously, Asad began strengthening aṣ-Ṣaʿiqah.[26] A Baʿth party congress meeting in May 1971 noted "the considerable decline in the role and effectiveness" of the various organizations of the Palestinian resistance and linked it causally to their "lack of clarity of vision," their "plural political and military commands," and their vulnerability to "plots by certain Arab regimes."[27]

But most hurtful from Fatḥ's standpoint was Asad's firm resolve to prevent a large guerrilla force based near Derʿa in southern Syria from reinforcing its comrades in their last holdouts in Jerash and ʿAjlūn in northern Jordan when, between July 13 and 19, 1971, they came under ruthless air, artillery, and tank attacks. By the time the battle was over, out of the 3,000 or so fedayeen penned up in that area, no fewer than 700 had laid down their lives and most of the others had been wounded or captured. The rest, to evade annihilation, floundered their way into the Israeli-occupied West Bank. It was a consummation that in effect meant the end of the P.L.O. as a viable force in Jordan, at least for the next decade. The negative impact of these events on Arab popular opinion prompted Asad to break diplomatic ties with King Ḥusayn.

Fatḥ felt more sharply the weight of Asad's disfavor after his shift in the autumn of 1971 toward an emphasis on reconciliation with the Jordanian monarch and, in particular, after the assassination in Cairo on November 28, 1971 of Jordan's Prime Minister Waṣfī-t-Tall, reportedly by Black September, an organization made up largely of younger and embittered rank-and-file Fatḥ militants. At a meeting attended by ʿArafāt, Abū Iyād, and Abū Jihād, Asad did not mince words. "Who touches[28] King Ḥusayn," he warned, "touches me personally. I do not need the Syrian army to liquidate you. I can liquidate you by a speech on the radio or television!"[29]

Fatḥ now found itself "boycotted" by Asad's regime. He and his aides refused to have relations of any kind with any of its leaders. At the same time, he sought to bring the Palestine Liberation Army units based in Syria under his control.

The Twists and Turns prior to and during the 1975–1976 Lebanese Civil Conflict and the Slide from Latent Enmity into Open War

Fatḥ gradually shifted its main activities to Lebanon where, under the Cairo Accord of November 3, 1969, the Palestinian revolution was allowed within specified limits an armed presence inside the refugee camps and in the ʿArqūb region, and freedom of operations in certain areas bordering Israel.[30]

But Asad's anti-Fatḥ stance was not free from complexity. While keeping the organization under restraint in Syria and cold-shouldering its leaders, he did not cut off supplies from its fighters in the ʿArqūb or other parts of Lebanon, and when the raids staged by these fighters provoked—to quote Senator J. William Fulbright—"indiscriminate" retaliatory air attacks by Israel upon the Palestinian refugee camps and Lebanese population centers (Moshe Dayan would before long openly threaten to render South Lebanon "unlivable"),[31] Asad covertly sent in the spring of 1973—to use his own words—"soldiers, deliberately chosen by us for pan-Arab reasons . . . , from every formation of the Syrian army . . . and with these soldiers we sent for the defense of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon whatever we could spare of the small number of one-man-rockets in our possession."[32]

More than that, when next, in May 1973, the Maronite establishment, apprehensive about the nascent convergence of interests between the Palestinian resistance and the disadvantaged Lebanese and pressed by cries from Maronite political parties about "Palestinian violation of Lebanese sovereignty," used Maronite-officered army and air units to shell and strafe the Palestinian camps, Asad swiftly responded by closing his frontiers with Lebanon. As this action interrupted the country's overland trade not only with Syria but also with Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and the Gulf countries, and threatened to bring ruin to Lebanon's apple harvest and other agricultural products coming into season, the Lebanese regime backed off its anti-Palestinian campaign and in due course, on May 18, 1973, signed the Melkart protocol, which aimed at a better application of the 1969 Cairo Accord.

But the way Asad now played out his response revealed that the protection of the Resistance had not been his primary concern. He determinedly refused to reopen the frontiers unless his Syrian opponents living in Lebanon were deprived of their political freedom and the Lebanese newspapers opposing his government or his policies were censored or shut down. He also insisted on the formation of a joint committee, including the chiefs of the Syrian and Lebanese general intelligence, with the object of coordinating the security policy of the two countries. His demands were quietly met.[33] From his standpoint, the enhancement of his ability to control events in Lebanon was indispensable in view of the war he and Anwar Sādāt of Egypt were planning for October. Incidentally, the leaders of Fatḥ would learn from Sādāt in August that Asad insisted that they should be kept in the dark about the approaching war. "I am at a loss

to understand," Sādāt would add, "why Asad holds you, and Yāsir ʿArafāt personally, in strong dislike."[34]

After the 1973 war, however, in the light of early indications that Sādāt was going his own separate way and withdrawing from "the confrontation line" with Israel, it became imperative for Asad and the Fatḥ-led resistance to present a common front. The Extraordinary Fifth Regional Baʿth Congress, meeting in May-June 1974, urged "concordance and coordination" with the P.L.O.[35] This policy remained in effect in the immediately ensuing period as the P.L.O. increased its weight in material and moral terms. The arms it now received directly from the Soviet Union[36] and the annual aid of $41 million granted to the organization by the wealthier Arab states reduced its dependence on Asad.[37] Moreover, in October 1974 it achieved recognition by the Arab League as "the sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinian people,[38] and in November of the same year secured "observer status" at the United Nations and a formal acknowledgment from the world body of the right of the Palestinians to national self-determination.[39] Simultaneously, even as the central authority in Lebanon progressively decayed, the leftist Palestinian organizations—notably the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (P.F.L.P.)—consolidated their ties with the Lebanese left-wing, pan-Arab, and underprivileged Muslim elements, which had come together under the umbrella of the National Movement formed in 1969 by the Druze socialist leader Kamāl Junblāṭ.

Under the impact of the vicissitudes of the bitter civil conflict in which Lebanon now became mired, Asad's tactics underwent marked twists and turns, invariably accompanied by appropriate pan-Arab phrase making. During and subsequent to the 1975–1976 fighting, while all along keeping more than one string to his bow and his lines open to the principal factions, he played them all off against one another and successively supported and dealt blows, directly or indirectly, to every contending side, eventually curbing or destabilizing all the various elements and turning the local balance of power in his favor.

In the initial phase of the fighting—which broke out on April 13, 1975, and was set off by an aberrant discharge of firearms from a passing car with no registration plate at Pierre Jemayyel, leader of the paramilitary Phalanges, outside a Maronite church in East Beirut, and by the massacre in the same district shortly afterward of a busload of unarmed Palestinians and Lebanese, including women and children[40]—Asad provided aid both to the P.L.O. and the Lebanese National Movement, and concurrently kept on good terms with Lebanon's Maronite President Sulaymān Franjieh. Fatḥ's leaders, however, who had hitherto been reluctant to get entangled in the meshes of Lebanon's domestic affairs and now confined themselves to defending the Palestinian camps, leaving the P.F.L.P. to fight side-by-side with the National Movement, sensed that while they tirelessly sought to quell the violence and painstakingly negotiated one truce after another, elements answerable to Syria's regime recurrently added fuel to the flame. But they also had reason to suspect that in certain instances Israel had, through its intelligence operatives, a hand in stirring up the fire.[41]

By December 1975 it became apparent that Asad was tilting away from the Lebanese National Movement (L.N.M.). On the sixth of that month he invited its archenemy Pierre Gemayyel to Damascus and treated him as a head of state.[42] On the ninth he persuaded the Shīʿī Movement of the Disinherited led by Imām Mūsa aṣ-Ṣadr and other Syrian-influenced parties to break ranks with the L.N.M.[43] He also attempted to drive a wedge between the L.N.M. and the P.L.O.

Underlying Asad's actions was his inability to bend the L.N.M.'s leader Kamāl Junblāṭ to his will. "The Syrians," Junblāṭ would later assert, "sought to force on all of us their point of view, their ideas, their interests, and their tutelage."[44] He and Asad agreed neither on means nor on objectives. While at this stage Asad pressed for an end to the fighting, Junblāṭ, in response to a spate of "killings on the basis of the identity card" initiated by the Phalanges, steered a confrontational course. Junblāṭ desired the replacement of the existing "confessionalized and tattered institutions" by "institutions genuinely secular and democratic," while Asad advocated compromise and eventually sponsored, in cooperation with traditional Muslim politicians and religious dignitaries, "timid" reforms, which in due course found expression in President Franjieh's "Constitutional Message" of February 1976.[45] The reforms called in essence for an equal representation of Muslims and Christians in parliament, parity between them in higher civil posts, and an enhancement of the power of the legislature, but retained the monopoly of the Maronites on the presidency, the Sunnīs on the premiership, and the Shīʿīs on the speakership of the house.[46]

It is very likely that Asad's withdrawal of support from the L.N.M. was related to a message from the U.S. government conveyed to Asad on October 16, 1975 by Richard Murphy, its ambassador to Damascus, inviting the Syrian leader, according to the correspondent of *Le Monde,* to favor a "balanced" solution of the Lebanese civil war and holding out the assurance of American approbation and an undertaking by Washington to prevail in due course upon Israel to agree to a Syrian intervention in Lebanon within "reasonable" bounds.[47]

In a public speech delivered on July 20, 1976, Asad gave a different version of the content of the American message. However, he read only "some of the passages" from the minutes of his meeting with Richard Murphy. From these passages it may be gathered that the U.S. ambassador sought to correct "an impression" in Syria that the U.S. "upholds the Christian diehards in Lebanon"; urged that "a well-grounded solution" which would meet the Christian community's "need to feel secure" should be acceptable to "the moderate Christians"; expressed interest in "Syria's plans"; and took pains to highlight "the carefully considered opinion" of the United States that "Israel will regard the entry of foreign armed forces into Lebanon as a very grave threat and will itself intervene, no matter what we might say [by way of dissuasion]." "This is an eventuality which we definitely wish to avoid," the ambassador added. He also emphasized that his demarche was not the result of "any joint discussions between Israel and the United States."

The "impression" to which Syrians were actually susceptible, Asad replied,

was that "the United States is playing a role in the fighting in Lebanon . . . primarily to enhance the prospects of the Sinai Agreement [of September 1, 1975]." Syria's own "serious concern" about the events in Lebanon stemmed from its belief that "all Lebanese—Christians and Muslims . . . are the sons of our Arab nation." This formed the basis of Syria's efforts "to put an end to the fighting" and create "the right atmosphere" for "a dialogue" between the various political forces with a view to the ultimate solution of their problems. As regards Israel, Asad pointed out that the conflict in Lebanon was "an internal Arab problem" and that "Israel has no right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Arab nation." Syria, he added, was ready to fight back "any time Israel seeks to confront us."[48]

It is not known what else, in a substantive sense, was said in the meeting between Asad and Richard Murphy. What is certain is that within the next two months Asad began drawing away from the left-inclined L.N.M. and closer to its enemies.

According to Asad, in the middle of January 1976, "despite our political efforts . . . and the large quantities and various types of arms and ammunition we provided . . . , the front of the national parties and the front of the Palestinian resistance collapsed . . . and cried out to us for help."[49] This version of the events scarcely accords with the facts. Far from exerting efforts on behalf of the L.N.M., Asad had since December 1975 been undermining it, as already noted. There is also no evidence that either the L.N.M. or the P.L.O. sent distress signals to Damascus. It is true that in early January, when Fatḥ still had most of its fighters in the south near the frontiers with Israel, the Maronite militias took the offensive: on the fourth they besieged the Palestinian refugee camp of Tall-az-Zaʿtar on the eastern outskirts of Beirut; on the twelfth they took by assault another camp, that of Ḍbayyeh, north of the city; and on the nineteenth swept away or, as the Maronite leader Camille Shamʿūn put it, "cleansed" the Muslim shanty area of al-Karantīnah.[50] On the other hand, Fatḥ, unable after the onslaught upon the refugee camps to hold aloof any longer, ordered part of its front-line forces to advance northward and, jointly with the L.N.M., attacked Dāmūr, a Maronite town overlooking the main Sidon-Beirut road, and two neighboring villages, including Saʿdiyyāt, the site of Shamʿūn's palace. "From a military standpoint," wrote Shamʿūn in his diary on January 14, "the balance [in the Dāmūr region] is tipping in favor of the Palestinians."[51] Moreover, in the Beirut area the fighters of the L.N.M., by capturing the two bridges over the Beirut River, cut off Beirut's Maronite suburbs from Jūnieh, the heart of the Maronite zone.[52]

Clearly, the L.N.M. and P.L.O. "fronts" did not "collapse," as Asad alleged. It is also doubtful that his subsequently publicized desire "to save the resistance" was the real reason for the order he gave to the units of the Palestine Liberation Army (P.L.A.) under his control to infiltrate into Lebanon on January 19 or for his cautionary advice over the phone on January 20 to President Sulaymān Franjieh that "as far as the Palestinians are concerned, there is a red

line which we will allow no one to cross under any circumstances."[53] In all probability, he was driven to act by his realization that events were spinning out of the range of his influence and that unless he intervened at that juncture in some form, it would be increasingly difficult for him to hold the balance between the contending forces and avert what he apprehended most—the partition of Lebanon along religious lines or intrusions by Israel.

In pursuit of his balance-of-forces policy, Asad steered, through the P.L.A. and aṣ-Ṣāʿiqah, which took their cue from him, an intricate and tortuous course. On January 3, 1976, he used aṣ-Ṣāʿiqah in an ineffectual attempt to create a breach between the L.N.M. and the P.L.O.[54] Between January 14 and 20, while keeping his lines open to the leader of one Maronite militia—Pierre Jemayyel of the Phalanges—he allowed aṣ-Ṣāʿiqah to play a conspicuous role in the assaults on Dāmūr, the fief of Camille Shamʿūn, leader of the Maronite "Tigers."[55] On January 23, while Asad's foreign minister and chief of staff were in Beirut on a peacemaking mission, P.L.A. units clashed with Maronite fighters at Zghorta in north Lebanon and with a formation of the Lebanese army in the Biqāʿ region. On February 1 other P.L.A. units gave battle to P.F.L.P. and other left-wing P.L.O. combatants to wrest from them control of a street in the ʿAyn ar-Rummāneh district of East Beirut. In March, aṣ-Ṣāʿiqah was transferring arms and ammunitions to the Phalanges.[56]

Asad's ability to guide events in Lebanon by pulling the strings from a distance through aṣ-Ṣāʿiqah or the P.L.A. was undermined, however, by a series of new and interrelated developments. In the first place, the falling away from the Lebanese army on January 21 of a number of Muslim military units, including artillery detachments, spurred on by Aḥmad al-Khaṭib, a Sunnī officer, and their espousal of the cause of the L.N.M. and the Palestinian resistance, led in the course of the next few months to the splintering of the entire Lebanese army along religious lines. The call on television on March 11 for the resignation of President Sulaymān Franjieh by General ʿAzīz al-Aḥdab, the Sunnī commander of the Beirut garrison, assisted this process. Next came the defection of several thousand rank-and-file fighters from aṣ-Ṣāʿiqah after it was employed by Asad to hinder the dissident Aḥmad al-Khaṭīb's units from advancing in mid-March on the presidential palace outside Beirut. Clearly, many of the Palestinians in aṣ-Ṣāʿiqah had come under the influence of the mainstream views of Fatḥ, and Asad could not be sure that the P.L.A. would not be similarly affected. For the time being, the new developments had the effect of giving the L.N.M. and P.L.O. the upper hand militarily. Urged by Kamāl Junblāṭ, who now pressed for "decisive military action," they went on the offensive on March 17, and in the course of the ensuing week drove the Maronite militias out of their last redoubts in West Beirut. Another attack launched on March 20 brought them to the heights commanding the Maronite region of al-Metn.[57]

Asad suspected that Fatḥ was behind Khaṭīb's rebellion and Aḥdab's "television coup," and interpreted its participation in the L.N.M. offensive as a deliberate attempt to cut the ground from under the February 1976 constitutional reform plan he put together with the traditional politicians. He did not hide his

feelings from Fatḥ's leaders, but in public he directed his ire at Kamāl Junblāṭ and, by massing a large force on the border, conveyed the message that he was about to engage Syria's military power. In the hope of averting this unrelished prospect, Fatḥ persuaded Junblāṭ to meet with Asad on March 27.

The watchword of the day in Baʿthist circles at Damascus was: "Junblāṭ is a dangerous man . . . and is going to involve us in another confrontation with Israel." Junblāṭ, for his part, was dead set against his country turning into a "satellite" of Asad and his countrymen entering "the great Syrian prison." He felt that what was happening in Lebanon was "the democratic emancipation of an entire people," and that this gave Asad's regime the shivers.[58] Such feelings boded ill for the meeting between the two leaders.

In the course of what turned out to be an ineffectual session, Asad dwelt on the need to end the civil war. A "conspiracy" was afoot, he maintained, "to dismember Lebanon and weaken the Palestinian resistance." Junblāṭ did not dissent. Asad then argued somewhat didactically that the success of the "conspiracy" could best be assured by more fighting and its defeat by the cessation of hostilities. Junblāṭ, as Asad put it, "rejected this self-evident truth" and pressed the point that only a decisive military action could bring "the war of the isolationists [the Maronite hard-liners]" to an end. "Junblāṭ," Asad later asserted, "believed that I was robbing him of a victory that was within his reach." In Junblāṭ's account of the meeting, Asad is depicted as expressing himself with much candor. For him, as he is said to have told Junblāṭ, it was "a historic opportunity to orient the Maronites toward Syria" and, by lending them a helping hand, bring them to the realization that they no longer needed to turn to "outsiders" for aid and protection. "I cannot allow you," Asad added, "to be the vanquisher of the Christian camp." "But," Junblāṭ retorted, "the isolationists do not represent more than 25 percent of the Christians." "Even so," rejoined Asad, "I cannot permit you to overpower them."[59]

One day later, on March 28, Asad conferred with Fatḥ's leaders and pressed them to disassociate themselves publicly from Junblāṭ. They refused to accede to this demand. When he next asked them to forbear from taking open exception to the contemplated entry of his troops into Lebanon, they "argued" against this course of action "at length" to his "obvious displeasure."[60] However, they yielded to his request to keep their men out of the fighting.[61]

On April 9, despite the suspension of hostilities seven days earlier, Asad sent his troops into Lebanon. Initially they dug in at the frontier post of al-Maṣnaʿ on the Damascus-Beirut road and then at the Ḍahr al-Baydar pass in the mountain range above Beirut. They did not penetrate further into Lebanon, except for several hundred men from the Special Forces apparently dressed in the uniforms of aṣ-Ṣāʿiqah who, together with members of this organization still loyal to Syria, occupied sensitive positions in Beirut and Tripoli. Simultaneously, Syrian ships patrolling the Lebanese coast blocked supplies to the L.N.M. forces.

Anxious to deny the accusation of adversaries that in his undertakings against the L.N.M.—and subsequently against the Palestinian resistance—he was

hand-in-glove with the United States, Asad would maintain in July that at this juncture or, to be precise, on April 14 he received an "ultimatum" from Washington that read: "The Israeli government has sent word to us that it considers the Syrian actions in Lebanon to have reached a point which, if transcended, would leave Israel no alternative but to take its own measures. . . . We in the United States are concerned that Syria might get the impression that the lack of an overt Israeli reaction is tantamount to a lack of Israeli concern about Syria's actions, contrary to what we have been persistently communicating to Damascus during the past weeks."

According to his own account, Asad's reply was if anything uncompromising, and ran along these lines:

> 1. Syria feels that in substance the message constitutes an ultimatum and unequivocally rejects it.
> 2. Syria is not ready now and will not be ready in the future to accept any ultimatum from any quarter in the world.
> 3. What is going on in Lebanon is an internal Arab affair with which the Arabs alone are entitled to deal.
> 4. The only consideration that . . . defines now and will define in the future the extent of Syria's intervention in Lebanon, including the size and location of its forces, is the interest of the Lebanese people, sharing with them, as we do, a common history . . . and a common destiny.[62]

To this day Asad has not come clean with regard to the informal U.S. brokered "red-line" understanding between him and Israel, which reportedly spelled out the restrictions imposed on his military involvement in Lebanon. "The 'red line,'" he told a delegation of the Maronite Lebanese Front toward the end of 1976,

> does not exist. In any case, I do not see it. At the beginning of this year the United States cautioned me and the Soviet Union advised me against crossing the Lebanese frontiers at al-Maṣnaʿ. At that time the mere entry of the Syrian army into Lebanon constituted for Israel a cause for war. The "red line" was, therefore, at al-Maṣnaʿ but when we went pass al-Maṣnaʿ [the Americans and the Israelis] referred to a new "red line" at Ṣofar and when we went beyond Ṣofar, they designated Beirut as the new "red line." Now that our troops are deployed in Beirut they point to an-Nabaṭiyyah and the Liṭānī River as the "red line." What is this "red line" that is so vague, mobile, and continually shifting?"[63]

These remarks cannot be reconciled with an account given by Talcott W. Seelye, who served as U.S. ambassador to Syria from 1978 to 1981. "American-Syrian relations, wrote Seelye in 1985,

> began to improve in 1976 when mutual interests in quelling the Lebanese civil war resulted in close cooperation. . . .
>
> The U.S. brokered a deal whereby Israel agreed to refrain from intervening if Syrian troops would not advance beyond a designated "red line" in southern

Lebanon. The U.S. was pleased with the outcome since it maintained a balance between the Lebanese factions and averted a leftist victory. On April 19, 1976, the White House announced publicly that "Syria has been playing a constructive role."[64]

When requested by this writer to comment on Asad's and Seelye's accounts, Richard Murphy, who was the U.S. Ambassador to Damascus from 1974 to 1978, observed: "I do not recall using the term "red line" or having a map with a red line on it. But it is fair to say that we did broker a deal. We had two concerns. The first was that the internal security situation in Lebanon was deteriorating and we knew that Lebanon was seeking Syrian assistance. Our second concern was that we did not want to see a war break out between Israel and Syria, should Syrian forces move into Lebanon."[65]

One fact, at least, is beyond question: at no point during or after the Lebanese civil war did Asad send his troops into the border area south of the Liṭānī River.

As early as 1976, the L.N.M. leader Kamāl Junblāṭ entertained the view that the idea of involving Asad militarily in Lebanon was the brainchild of U.S. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger who has, as was known, a special propensity for secret and roundabout dealings.[66] The leaders of Fatḥ were no less convinced that Asad was caught in a web that the artful American statesman had spun. "Our Syrian brothers," observed Abū Iyād in 1978, "fell into the . . . trap laid by Henry Kissinger," who desired "a Syrian-Palestinian confrontation" in order to deflect Arab minds from "his intrigues" on behalf of "Israeli and U.S. interests in the region."[67] That Abū Iyād did not stray far from reality finds confirmation in the perceptive pages of the British writer Patrick Seale.[68]

But Asad was all along aware of the perilous waters he was swimming in, and tried with the utmost skill he could muster to keep the game in his own hands and oriented toward his own purposes. Rather than smash the Palestinian resistance—a measure probably hoped for by the Israelis but prejudicial to his interests—he sought merely to curb its power, bend it to his will, and disarm its leftist Lebanese allies, sensing, as he did, that his already unpopular turn of policy could stir up a hornets' nest in his home base.

Asad may have played fast and loose with the facts about the "red line" deal, but it is clear from the cautious and deliberate manner in which he penetrated into Lebanon that he trusted neither Kissinger nor the Israelis. After an initial thrust of several miles, his troops came to a halt while he assessed the repercussions regionally and abroad, leaving everyone in doubt about his real intentions. Then his forces resumed their advance, only to interrupt it again even as he called for fence-mending talks with the P.L.O. After that he repeatedly alternated military blows with political pressure, all the while subordinating his military initiatives to his political aims and keeping an eye on the Israeli menace farther afield.

Asad was so wary and so anxious to avoid risks that from April 9 to May 31, 1976, his military intervention took on the appearance of a limited undertaking. If afterward it grew larger in scale, involving at its climax about 30,000 of

Asad's men and permeating by late June all of eastern Lebanon, including the Biqāʿ valley, it was not until mid-November, after several military drives interspersed by several long pauses and the mediation of the Riyāḍ and Cairo Arab summits, that Asad took full control in west Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon.

But in the intervening five months the hitherto latent enmity between Asad and the Palestinian guerrillas had turned into open war. It was an unequal conflict that Fatḥ's leaders had no illusion of winning. Nevertheless, troubled by the prospect of losing their freedom of action, they took on Asad's army as it advanced. Eventually, the Syrian leader tipped the scales against them and their L.N.M. allies by cutting them off from their sources of weapons and supplies, and providing crucial support to their right-wing Maronite opponents.

To the rank-and-file Palestinians, Asad's actions had the appearance of stabs in the back. Their bitterness against him deepened with the tragedy of the Tall-az-Zaʿtar refugee camp, which they also laid to his account. Situated inside the Maronite enclave, the camp had borne since June 21 the frightful strains of a sustained attempt to reduce it by starvation. By now pinning down the main Palestinian forces in the mountains, Asad in effect freed the right-wing militias for an all-out attack on Tall-az-Zaʿtar. Its fall on August 12, after a fierce resistance put up from underground redoubts, touched off the massacre by the Phalanges and Camille Shamʿūn's men of no fewer than 3,000 civilians caught in the camp.

These grim events, which darkened the history of inter-Arab relations with an indelible stain, and the bewildering coincidence in 1976 of Asad's and Israel's interests—both furnished the Maronites with arms, and their warships obstructed Palestinian resupply in different sectors of the Lebanese coast—broke in rudely upon the general Arab feeling. Since 1917 no regime in Syria, whatever its coloring, had fought the Palestinians. It was a policy without precedent and shocked and alienated wide segments of Syrian opinion, ultimately bringing, along with other factors, the Muslim Brethren and their sympathizers to the point of active revolt.

For all that, Asad gained only an increased leverage but not complete control over the Palestinian resistance. Ironically, the so-called "red-line" deal, by confining his forces to the regions north of the Liṭānī River, enabled the guerrillas to avoid passing fully under his yoke. But before long their free area south of the Liṭānī was turned by the Israelis into a free-fire zone.

An Interlude of Apparent Harmony

New circumstances and strong common interests concurred to bring Asad and Fatḥ together again. The creation in the autumn of 1976 of a hostile enclave in the frontier region under the Israeli-sponsored Lebanese Major Saʿd Ḥaddād; the rise to power in Israel in May 1977 of the Likud and of its extremist leader Menachem Begin, and his escalation of the Israeli artillery and air attacks against Palestinian bases and refugee camps in southern Lebanon, notwithstand-

ing the commitment by the P.L.O. in its July 1977 Shtaura Agreement with Syria to forbear from guerrilla incursions into Israel; the visit to Jerusalem on November 19, 1977, of Egypt's President Anwar Sādāt and his signature of the Camp David Accords on September 17, 1978, and of a separate peace treaty with Israel on March 26, 1979; the breakdown of the alliance between Syria and the Maronite militias in February 1978; the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon in the following March and the flight of about a quarter of a million people northward; the concentration in the course of the same year of Maronite power in the hands of Bashīr Jemayyel, leader of the Phalanges, and his increasingly open cooperation with Israel; the adoption in January 1979 of an Israeli preemptive strike policy vis-à-vis the P.L.O.; the outbreak in September 1980 of the Iraq-Iran war and the attendant deepening deterioration in the Arab ability to balance off Israeli power; Begin's threat in the spring of 1981 to destroy the surface-to-air missile batteries installed by Asad in the Biqāʿ valley; and Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights on December 14, 1981—all these factors impelled Asad and ʿArafāt to push aside their differences and rekindle their old alliance.

With the border area dominated by Fatḥ recurrently under fire, ʿArafāt early realized how crucial for the P.L.O. was the rebuilding of bridges with Syria, and for this purpose he expended much effort and diplomacy from the autumn of 1976 onward. A note of urgency pervaded his 1977 appeals to Damascus. "I implore our brother, the president," he wrote to Asad on September 18, when his forces were the object of fierce attacks from Ḥaddād's enclave and from Israel proper, "to stand with us in these difficult times and plead with him to supply us in all haste with the ammunition we need."[69]

Asad could not remain indifferent to ʿArafāt's appeals, if only because for some time already his regime had been suffering from a sharp loss in public confidence. He had indeed earlier—in April—loosened his grip on the P.L.O.'s supply artery, and now allowed the freer movement southward of Palestinian heavy weapons that, under an agreement reached on December 4, 1976, had been turned in at depots jointly guarded by guerrillas and Syrian soldiers.

But it was under the stimulus of Sādāt's visit to Jerusalem and its sequel that the relations between Fatḥ and Asad's regime significantly improved. In the words of Abū Iyād, "Asad suddenly altered all his tactics with regard to the resistance."[70] At his initiative, Syria and the P.L.O. became the core of the "Steadfastness and Confrontation Front" that was established on December 5, 1977 and included, as supporting members, Libya, Algeria, and South Yemen.[71] Although during the 1978 Israeli drive against Palestinian positions in southern Lebanon Syria remained militarily inactive, in 1979 it took upon itself to defend the Palestinian camps against air raids with SAM–7s.[72]

In time, the new feelings of concord grew warm enough for ʿArafāt to hail Syria on January 4, 1980, at the Seventh Baʿth Regional Congress as "the basis" and Asad as "the hero of steadfastness in our Arab nation."[73] In the course of the next few months, the area in Lebanon under de facto P.L.O. control expanded in the wake of a decision by Asad to withdraw his troops for precau-

tionary reasons from the whole coastal strip south of Beirut. This move increased the freedom of the P.L.O. but, by adding to its internal security burdens and inducing a certain dispersal of its forces, made it more vulnerable to Israeli military blows.[74]

The 1982 Israeli Invasion of Lebanon and the Virtual Abandonment of the Palestinian Resistance to Its Fate

On May 1, 1982, with the accumulating evidence of an imminent large-scale Israeli invasion—three Israeli divisions had massed near the Lebanese frontiers and Abū Iyād had gotten wind, through his intelligence sources, of Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon's secret January visit to the Maronite enclave around Beirut and of its purport—Syria and the P.L.O. placed their "strategic relationship" on a more concrete basis.[75] According to Abū Iyād, up to this point Asad and his aides had evaded any discussions with Fatḥ's leaders of the impending Israeli drive, but now Asad undertook not only to provide air cover for the Palestinian fighters but also "to back them with a large contingent from the Special Forces, if the invasion was confined to southern Lebanon, and to throw into the fray the whole weight of Syria's military power, if the battles extended to the entire country."[76]

Asad did not or could not live up to his commitments, however. In fact, on May 20, fifteen days before the initiation of hostilities by Israel, he withdrew his SAM–7s from the Palestinian camps.[77] After the outbreak of the war, and consequent to the destruction of his SAM network in the Biqāʿ and the impairment of his air force, his troops avoided becoming entangled in a full-scale fight with the invaders, retaliating—but with restraint—only when they were struck and, except for the 2,500 Syrian and 2,700 Syrian-controlled P.L.A. soldiers trapped in Beirut who fought with high courage, did very little to help the Palestinian guerrillas. On June 11, only five days after the start of the ground war and two days before the Israelis encircled West Beirut, Asad gave his assent to a separate cease-fire, which Israel subsequently broke by attacking Syrian positions on the Beirut-Damascus highway; after another cease-fire on June 25, Asad ran no hazard and in effect drew back from the war.

Underlying his line of conduct were sound military reasons that were reviewed in Chapter 15. To an inquiry by an envoy from Algeria during the Israeli siege of Beirut, as to the measures needed to assist the Palestinians, Asad replied that he would not be involved in a battle at a time or place not of his own choosing. "This war," he added, "is not my war!"[78]

Left to their own devices and with the scales heavily weighted against them (the invading force added up perhaps to about 90,000 men and 1,300 tanks),[79] the no more than 8,000 P.L.O. regular and part-time guerrillas in Beirut fought on, flinching from no danger. "The longer they withstood the siege," Abū Iyād would maintain later, "the more Asad's prestige suffered. It was as if our tenacity took him by surprise. Through side contacts by surrogates in Lebanon he

pleaded, while the eyes of the world and of the Arab people were on Beirut, that ʿArafāt personally pay public tribute to Syria's role in the war."[80] Like the twenty-two other Arab "zeros," as ʿArafāt was wont to say, Asad merely watched while the Israelis pressed the siege and carried out saturation bombings of city quarters and refugee camps with calculated ruthlessness, producing great devastation and much civilian misery. On ʿArafāt's count, during the eighty-eight days of the war and in its immediate aftermath, the Palestinians and their Lebanese allies suffered no fewer than 72,000 dead and wounded, mostly civilians, including the victims of the tank and artillery bombardment of the ʿAin Ḥilweh refugee camp near Sidon and of the horrible carnage at Ṣabra and Shatīlah in Beirut.[81]

The Rupture of Relations and the Battle of Tripoli

The emergence of ʿArafāt from the battle of Beirut with an enhanced prestige; his open criticism of Syria's inadequate support of the Palestinian resistance during the war; his tendency to experiment with a diplomatic option in the search for a national homeland, and to abstain from dismissing out of hand the Reagan peace initiative of September 1, 1982, which took no account whatever of Asad's concerns; his refusal to set up his headquarters in Syria (he had received word, by unofficial means, that if, on leaving Beirut, he would go to Damascus, Asad personally would come out to welcome him);[82] and, last not but least, Asad's now intensified indirect attempts to chip away at ʿArafāt's authority and Fatḥ's influence, cumulatively caused the open rupture in 1983 between Asad and Fatḥ's leaders, bringing all their hidden bitterness to the surface.

Even in the period 1979–1982, the Syrian-Fatḥ relationship, though ostensibly amicable, was in reality far from smooth. Asad appears not to have missed an occasion to make things inconvenient for ʿArafāt. Thus on October 31, 1977, the latter complained to Asad about a statement circulated by men from aṣ-Ṣāʿiqah referring to an alleged incipient movement against Fatḥ's military command, and about threats by a certain Abū Sāʿid, also a member of aṣ-Ṣāʿiqah, to kidnap and assassinate leading elements in Fatḥ. "I hasten to write to you," ʿArafāt added, "in the hope that an end will be made of these grave practices and trust that Abū Sulaymān with his known wisdom and sense of honor will straighten things out."[83] Again in 1978, Aḥmad Jibrīl, leader of the P.F.L.P.—General Command, who did nothing without Asad's knowledge, tried, as he himself subsequently revealed, to persuade George Ḥabash of the P.F.L.P. and Nāyef Ḥawātmeh of the D.F.L.P. to join forces with him with a view to "paralyzing the commanding role of the rightist ʿArafāt line." Jibrīl also disclosed that at a meeting in Benghāzī in 1979, Asad and Muʿammar al-Qaḍḍāfī of Libya had agreed on the desirability of ousting ʿArafāt from the leadership of the P.L.O., and for this purpose lent active support to the Palestinian groups opposed to him and sought to alter in their favor the balance of forces within

the resistance movement.[84] In line with this policy was the surfacing in Damascus in 1981 under the protection of Asad's regime of the guerrilla organization headed by Abū Niḍāl, who broke with Fatḥ in 1974 and had a hand in the killing of peace activists within the P.L.O.[85]

Asad's stepped-up efforts to undermine ʿArafāt's power stemmed not only from ʿArafāt's persistent refusal to follow Asad's leading strings but also from Asad's growing suspicion that Fatḥ had a part in furnishing arms to his sworn enemies, the Muslim Brethren. In this connection the man whom Syrian Intelligence presumed to be directly involved was Abū Ṭaʿān (Ḥusayn Dīb), the head of the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command, the P.L.O. military police in northern Lebanon. At one point in 1980 word reached Fatḥ that the Asad regime had taken a decision to "liquidate" him.[86] But later he was apprehended by Syrian agents and accused of heading a P.L.O. apparatus entrusted with the arming of the Muslim Brethren. He allegedly made an avowal and revealed "significant details."[87] However, Fatḥ's leaders categorically denied that they had anything to do with the supply of weapons to Muslim militants in Syria.[88]

At any rate, Asad entertained the view that one of the objectives of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon had been, as Abū Māher, Fatḥ's representative in Damascus, put it in 1982, "the transformation of the Palestinian Resistance from a problem for Israel to a problem for Syria."[89] This, among other factors, prompted Asad's initial refusal to give sanctuary to the guerrillas encircled in Beirut, but later on he changed his mind and took in no fewer than 3,750 P.L.O. fighters, which nearly doubled the number of P.L.O. regulars in the Lebanese areas controlled by Syrian troops. But the real "problem" was at bottom more political than military because of the support the Resistance enjoyed not only among the Palestinian people but in Syria proper. This made it all the more necessary, from Asad's standpoint, to have a more tractable leadership at the head of the P.L.O.

The opportunity for Asad came with the outbreak on May 10, 1983, of a mutiny in Fatḥ's ranks in the Biqāʿ valley; it was inspired by Abū Ṣāleḥ (Nimr Ṣāleḥ), a Fatḥ's Central Committee member, and Colonel Abū Khālid al-ʿAmleh, a Fatḥ professional officer and, subsequently, "the real mover" of the rump Fatḥ faction, and led by Colonel Abū Mūsa (Saʿīd Mūsa Maraghah), a respected career officer and a veteran of the Jordanian army who had been trained at Sandhurst. The mutiny was precipitated by ill-received appointments to key commands in the Biqāʿ of two officers who had performed poorly in the 1982 war but whom ʿArafāt implicitly trusted, and by dissatisfaction with ʿArafāt's "imperious" style of leadership and his attempts to steer the P.L.O. away from "armed struggle" and toward diplomatic initiatives. But the mutineers' designation of their anti-ʿArafāt drive as a "corrective movement"—the very terms Asad had applied to his 1970 coup against his Baʿthist rivals—and the fact that the rebel Abū Ṣāleḥ had since 1980 been drawn into Asad's orbit, point to possible influence or prompting from the Syrian leader. Less open to dispute was his readiness to cull advantage from Fatḥ's problems.

The way Asad now proceeded against ʿArafāt is instructive. Initially he pur-

sued two lines—one secret, the other public—and the line he pursued in secrecy he disowned publicly. In public he acted the part of a mediator. He sent letters in May 1983 to ʿArafāt and other Fatḥ leaders enjoining them "to show wisdom in the present crisis and appreciate the gravity of the circumstances facing Syria and the P.L.O." Through his vice premier, ʿAbd-ul-Ḥalīm Khaddām, he proposed first the reconstitution of Fatḥ's Central Committee, giving equal representation to the dissidents and the ʿArafāt loyalists, and second the replacement of Abū Jihād, ʿArafāt's military aide, by Abū Mūsa in the post of deputy commander-in-chief of the forces of the Palestinian revolution. At the same time Asad quietly facilitated the seizure by the mutineers of the Syrian-guarded Fatḥ supply depots near Damascus.[90]

When it became clear that Abū Mūsa did not muster enough support in the ranks of Fatḥ—he succeeded in bringing over to his side only a few hundred Fatḥ fighters, and later drew recruits from Palestinian camps inside Syria—the Syrian-controlled aṣ-Ṣāʿiqah and the P.F.L.P. General Command rallied to his cause. But the P.F.L.P. and the D.F.L.P. did not back him up. In the eighth week of the mutiny, however, Syria became more directly involved in the crisis. On June 23, ʿArafāt openly charged that Asad's army had cut off supplies to his men and shelled their positions in the Biqāʿ valley. "My problem," he said, "is clearly . . . with Syria, not with Abū Mūsa. I am trying not to close the last window with the Syrians but the matter is up to them. The Syrians want to decide for the Palestinians. That decision I will not give to anyone."[91] Taking ill this "false accusation" and still feigning innocence, Asad brusquely expelled ʿArafāt two days later from Syria and the areas in Lebanon in which Syria had the upper hand, thus denying him direct access to his forces in Tripoli and the Biqāʿ valley.[92]

The reaction to Asad's move among Palestinians was such that the very next day, June 26, the grand muftī of Jerusalem, Shaykh Saʿd-ud-Dīn al-ʿAlamī, issued an extraordinary and stunning fatwa—authoritative legal opinion—against the Syrian president. "This Asad," the fatwa read, "had murdered many Muslims, including Palestinian Muslims. The Islamic law is that such a person must be killed."[93]

Although in the following weeks the ring around ʿArafāt loyalists in eastern Lebanon was tightened, they did not bend their necks but gave blow for blow. On August 2 the Political Directorate of the General Command of the Syrian Armed Forces deemed it necessary to warn "in plain words that the fighting in the Biqāʿ . . . between the rival Fatḥ tendencies has become a menace to our troops." The directorate did not shrink from openly expressing the view that the way to stop the fighting for good was "to put an end to ʿArafāt . . . once and for all."[94]

But this did not prevent the Palestinian leader from slipping on September 18 into the northern Lebanese port of Tripoli, where his new allies, the anti-Asad Muslim fundamentalists, had much influence, and about 2,000 loyal Fatḥ guerrillas had struck roots. ʿArafāt came by boat, which he had taken on learning of preparations by the Syrian army to finish off his partisans. He now set up his

headquarters in the Baddāwī refugee camp, but had also supporters in the camp of Nahr-il-Bārid, ten miles north of the city, and was soon—on September 30—unexpectedly joined by the survivors of the loyalists who had been pushed out of the Biqāʿ and hemmed by Syrian tanks and special units into a valley thirty-five miles east of Tripoli, but had somehow under cover of night passed through their containment lines undetected. ʿArafāt's aggregate strength came to close to 4,000 men.

From Asad's viewpoint, it was necessary to drive ʿArafāt out of Tripoli before the city could become a rallying ground for the enemies of his regime. But, as usual, he moved slowly and deliberately, running no unnecessary risks, and to the end would maintain the pretense that his army had no role in the attacks against the forces abetting ʿArafāt. Presaging the approach of a decisive trial of strength was the announcement on October 17 "in a theatrical fashion" that Brigadier Ṭāriq Khaḍrah, the commander of the Syrian-controlled Palestinian Liberation Army units, had joined the dissidents and endorsed their call for the removal of ʿArafāt from the P.L.O. chairmanship.[95] But the battle was not joined until November 3, when an anti-ʿArafāt force of about 8,000 moved on the Palestinian camps, supported by shelling from long-held Syrian emplacements south of Tripoli. Outnumbered, outgunned, and with his back to the sea, ʿArafāt held on for three weeks. After that a cease-fire went into effect. Eventually, on December 20, he and his guerrillas left the city by boat. In the interval no fewer than 450 Palestinians were killed and over a thousand were wounded, mostly civilians.[96] Western international relief workers were "mystified" by "the stony stoicism of the Palestinians which causes small boys who are wounded not to cry as they wait for doctors to pick out shrapnel."[97]

Two facts about the battle of Tripoli were of particular significance. One relates to the behavior of some of the ʿAlawī artillerists involved in the drive against ʿArafāt. As the fighting raged they sent word to the P.L.O. command that they would not direct their gunfire at its forces but at the sea. They had been propagandized by a clandestine opposition group—the Democratic National Party—led by Aḥmad Sulaymān al-Aḥmad, son of one of the more distinguished ʿAlawī religious shaykhs of his time.[98]

The other fact was the coincidence of the interests of Asad and those of Israel. As in the year 1976, they shared the common ground of opposing the independent will of the Palestinian people that ʿArafāt personified. While Asad's artillerists battered the positions of the P.L.O. Chairman from land, Israeli gunboats, lying off Tripoli, shelled them from the sea. It would also appear that Israel had planned the assassination of ʿArafāt by special units that were to infiltrate the port under the cover of naval gunfire, but was dissuaded from this course by the U.S. government.[99] Asad and Israel were united in one other thing: they were displeased, for their own different reasons, by ʿArafāt's diplomatic initiatives. Asad wanted the Palestinian card in his own hands. The Likud leadership preferred, as things stood, a more radical P.L.O. "It may be," Yitzhak Shamir had admitted on June 24, "that ʿArafāt's tactics are sometimes more dangerous for us."[100] But at bottom Shamir and his colleagues favored most the

elimination of the P.L.O. as a real force in Middle East politics. In this they were again at one with Asad.

ʿArafāt Springs Surprises

The aims of Asad and the Israeli leadership seemed close to realization on December 20, 1983, as the ships carrying ʿArafāt and his fighters set sail from Tripoli. With his wings clipped, the prospect that lay before him and the P.L.O. looked gloomy indeed. But within two days the expectations of Asad and Israel were frustrated by ʿArafāt's surprise meeting with Egypt's President Ḥusnī Mubārak, the news of which produced something of a sensation.

The Arab countries had kept the Cairo government at arm's length since 1979, and now ʿArafāt, shutting his eyes to its separate treaty with Israel, was shaking hands with its leader. Egypt's secret supply of arms to ʿArafāt during the days preceding the battle of Tripoli was the straw that had pointed the way of the wind. Yet ʿArafāt's bold step was undertaken more under the stress of circumstances than from inclination or a sense of gratitude, for without the renewal of his links with Cairo and, earlier, with Jordan, he would have had much difficulty preventing Asad from utterly choking the P.L.O.'s freedom of initiative.

But the real source of ʿArafāt's persisting influence was the esteem in which he was held by the greater number of rank-and-file Palestinians who scorned the Fatḥ dissidents and their role as Asad's instruments. Ironically, by making up with Egypt and thus ultimately facilitating its return to the Arab fold, ʿArafāt also smoothed the way for Asad's own turnabout six years later when, to break the isolation into which his support for Iran during its war with Iraq and the decline of Iran's fortunes in the fighting had led him, he restored his diplomatic relations with Egypt.

As was to be expected, the Mubārak-ʿArafāt meeting provoked protests from many directions. Israel charged Mubārak with doing violence to "the spirit" of the 1979 peace treaty. Syria condemned ʿArafāt for bolstering "capitulationism." George Ḥabash of the P.F.L.P. pressed for ʿArafāt's resignation as chairman of the P.L.O. Even Fatḥ's Central Committee chided its leader for flying in the face of the rule of "collective leadership." Later, on June 22, 1984, in the hope of healing the breach in P.L.O. ranks, ʿArafāt himself admitted, in an accord with the leaders of the P.F.L.P. and D.F.L.P., that his initiative "had gone beyond" the P.L.O.'s standing resolutions. In the same accord he joined with the other signatories in calling for "a comprehensive national dialogue" involving all groups, and agreed to leave the determination of the P.L.O.'s next steps ultimately to the Palestinian National Council, the Palestinian People's equivalent of a national parliament.[101]

But the Syrian-backed factions conditioned their participation in the proposed dialogue on the "repudiation of the leadership of ʿArafāt."[102] Moreover, at

Asad's urging, Algeria declined to host a meeting of the Palestine National Council.[103]

ʿArafāt now sprang another surprise: on November 10 he announced that the Council would convene in ʿAmmān, the site of the guerrillas' unforgettable 1970 ordeal. Asad tried by every means to deny the Council the quorum necessary for its valid transactions. "The Syrian decision," as ʿArafāt put it, was, whoever "attends the Council will not set foot in Damascus."[104] Subsequently, the Syrian Baʿth Command claimed that when the Council finally met in the fourth week of November, it lacked the requisite number of delegates.[105] According to Abū Iyād, however, eleven more than the required two-thirds majority attended the ʿAmmān session.[106] But inasmuch as the P.F.L.P., the D.F.L.P., and the Fatḥ malcontents boycotted the meeting, Asad succeeded in preventing ʿArafāt from restoring the cohesion of the P.L.O. The session ended on November 29 with the reelection of ʿArafāt as chairman of the P.L.O. Executive Committee. While leaving the pursuit of a peace initiative to the discretion of this committee, the Council explicitly excluded U.N. Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967 as an appropriate negotiating framework on the ground that the resolution merely referred to "a just settlement of the refugee problem" and made no mention of Palestinian national rights.

The ʿArafāt-King Ḥusayn 1985 Initiative

ʿArafāt's next move widened the chasm between him and Syria's regime. On February 11, 1985, he reached an accord with King Ḥusayn on the principles for a joint Palestinian-Jordanian peace initiative, including, among other things, withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied in the 1967 war in exchange for peace; negotiations under the auspices of the five permanent members of the Security Council, with all the parties to the conflict attending and the P.L.O. represented on an equal footing within a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation; and the exercise by the Palestinian people of their "inalienable right to self-determination" within "the context of . . . a confederation of the Arab states of Jordan and Palestine."[107]

Asad interpreted the accord as an attempt to side-step Syria and push it into the background. He countered by encouraging the formation in Damascus on March 25 of an alternative P.L.O., the Palestine National Salvation Front, which embraced, apart from the old Syrian-backed groups, the P.F.L.P. and the Fatḥ dissidents. Asad also sought to bring pressure to bear on King Ḥusayn by setting on foot a Jordanian party hostile to his regime.

Eventually the Ḥusayn-ʿArafāt initiative fizzled out, not because of anything that Asad did but, to use the words of ʿArafāt, by reason of the U.S. administration's "unchanging . . . three negatives—no to the P.L.O., no to an independent Palestinian state, and no to an international conference."[108] ʿArafāt, negotiating with the Ronald Reagan administration through King Ḥusayn, had gone as far as agreeing to persuade the P.L.O. Executive Committee to recognize Israel and

accept U.N. Resolution 242, provided the United States conceded the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination within the context of a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation. Over the American unwillingness to give ground on this issue, the negotiations collapsed.[109]

In view of Israel's unremitting de facto annexation of the occupied territories—its virtual possession by 1983, through seizure of Arab lands and other practices, of "over 40 percent of the West Bank land mass and 31 percent of Gaza strip area"[110]—the Likud's determination not to exchange land for peace, the insistence of the more flexible leaders of the Israeli Labor party on excluding the P.L.O. from any peace process, the considerable influence of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee on U.S. Middle East policy, and the strong pro-Israel bias of the Reagan administration, it is not clear why in 1985 Ḥusayn and ʿArafāt expected anything worthwhile to ensue from their initiative. Just one year before, the blind eye the American government turned to Israel's occupation practices, and particularly its refusal to exert any tangible pressure on the Jewish state concerning the precondition of a settlement freeze, which had formed part of Reagan's own 1982 peace plan, sent Jordan's King "climbing right through the roof." "I now realize," he said, "that principles mean nothing to the U.S."[111]

The Reemergence of Fatḥ in Lebanon's Military Equation, the Alleged "Assurances" to Israel, and the "War of the Camps" of 1985–1988

ʿArafāt's accord with Ḥusayn was not his only challenge to Asad's regional position in the mid-1980s. By availing himself of the shifts in inter-Arab relations and in the patterns of power in Lebanon, and turning to account the tensions between Damascus and Baghdad and the conflicts between Asad and the Maronite Lebanese Forces or between the Syrian-aligned Shīʿī Amal and the Iranian-backed fundamentalist Ḥizbullah, ʿArafāt succeeded in rebuilding his power base in Lebanon's refugee camps. From 1983 onward, Palestinian fighters from the P.F.L.P., D.F.L.P., and Fatḥ took an active part in the clandestine armed resistance that turned southern Lebanon into "a death trap" for the Israeli soldiers and prompted Israel's decision of January 1985 to withdraw its forces by stages from the entire area, its self-declared "security" enclave excepted.[112] ʿArafāt went as far as asserting two months afterward that the armed resistance in southern Lebanon was "Palestinian first and then Lebanese." By way of evidence he adduced "Amal's agreement with Israel" to keep the Palestinian guerrillas at bay. ʿArafāt also explained why no credit had been taken for Palestinian operations against the occupying army: at a meeting in Damascus in the autumn of 1982, attended by some of the leaders of the Lebanese National Movement, the P.L.O. Executive Committee, voting ʿArafāt down, agreed to Palestinian armed actions being carried out in the name of "the

Lebanese Resistance" in the hope of "bolstering the position of the Lebanese people."[113]

Inasmuch as Asad assisted to a significant degree the emergence of Amal in 1984 as a major force in southern Lebanon and its rise to ascendancy in West Beirut, and since Amal took no important step that did not have Asad's sanction, it is inconceivable that Amal would have concluded an "agreement with Israel" without Asad's knowledge, assuming the agreement's historicity. In this connection it is worthwhile taking note of the contents of an internal P.L.O. memorandum dated October 26, 1984. "The ambassador of Austria," the memorandum read, "has conveyed [information] that secret negotiations have been going on between Israel and Syria . . . and that the understanding between them is well advanced." The ambassador was also quoted as saying that ʿArafāt constituted a "basic problem" for both states and that they had "jointly decided to work against him."[114]

It is not possible to say how much credence can be placed in this memorandum or whether ʿArafāt subsequently received pertinent evidence of a more solid nature, but on May 17, 1985 he maintained in a public statement in Tunis that Syria—and Amal's leaders—had given assurances to Israel to safeguard its northern border by preventing the P.L.O. from reestablishing a fighting presence in southern Lebanon. If such assurances were given by Syria, it is most likely that they were of an informal and indirect nature, that is, given orally, perhaps through one of Amal's leaders, in much the same way as the secret assurances Asad reportedly gave to Israel in 1974 through Henry Kissinger to prevent the infiltration of Palestinian guerrillas into Israel across the Syrian border.[115]

In any case, Asad, viewing the reemergence of ʿArafāt in Lebanon's military equation as a threat to his regional influence, reacted by letting Amal loose upon the Palestinian camps in Beirut and near Tyre and Sidon. Amal had its own reasons for opposing the return of the Palestinian guerrillas, of course. It feared not only a shift to its disadvantage in the local distribution of power but also a resumption of the Israeli policy of destructive reprisals and, therefore, more suffering for its Shīʿī constituency.

Supplied by the Syrian regime with rockets, artillery, and T54 tanks, Amal's militiamen, whom Fatḥ had trained in the 1970s, besieged the refugee camps and battled the Palestinians on and off from May 19, 1985, to January 20, 1988. The recurrent bitter fighting, which came to be known as the "War of the Camps," left some 3,000 dead, countless wounded and maimed, and the greater part of the Shatīlah and Burj-al-Barājnah camps—on Beirut's southern fringes—in utter ruin.

At one point during a relentless five-month-long siege of Burj-al-Barājnah in 1986–1987 the Palestinian refugees faced life-threatening shortages of food and medicine and were reduced to eating grass, dogs, and cats.[116] This shows once again that Asad had no scruples about the methods he employed to achieve his aims or the extremities to which he resorted against any element that stood in his way.

During an earlier 1985 siege of the same camp by Amal, at an Arab League meeting in Tunis that appealed for "lifting the blockade . . . adhering to the precepts of Arab magnanimity, and facilitating the missions of the International Red Cross and the Red Crescent," Asad's representative made plain that "Syria . . . considers the fighting around the refugee camps as an internal Lebanese affair."[117]

It is also significant, in the light of the reported understanding between Israel, Syria, and Amal, that, when in 1986 the Palestinian guerrillas gained the upper hand over Amal in the hills overlooking Sidon, Israeli warplanes intervened in the battle by strafing Palestinian positions.[118]

The "War of the Camps" had results that Asad had not foreseen. In the first place, the Syrian-sponsored Palestine National Salvation Front virtually collapsed. In the 1985–1986 phase of the fighting, all the Palestinian organizations closed ranks. The P.F.L.P., the D.F.L.P., the groups of Aḥmad Jibrīl and Abū Niḍāl, and Abū Mūsa's rump Fatḥ faction helped the ʿArafāt loyalists by directing their fire against Amal. Asad responded by sealing their offices, closing down their publications, and confiscating their possessions in Syria—temporarily, as it turned out. He also put down by force demonstrations by refugees in the Yarmūk and ath-Thawrah camps near Damascus, and was said to have taken more than 2,300 activists and other Palestinians into custody. After the defeat in November 1986 of the Amal militia by the ʿArafāt loyalists in the hills above Sidon, the Jibrīl and Abū Mūsa factions shifted to a neutral course.[119]

In the second place, the war produced an unexpected change in Palestinian-Maronite relations. In an apparent effort to loosen the tightening grip of Amal on West Beirut and southern Lebanon and curb Syria's influence, the Maronite forces of Lebanese President Amīn Jemayyel assisted the movement into the country of large numbers of fighters loyal to ʿArafāt through the port of Jūnieh.[120] This occurred after the ouster on January 16, 1986, from the command of the Maronite militia of the Israeli-trained Elie Ḥobeika, who had bent his knee to Asad and whom Damascus had embraced despite his own admission from Israel's radio that he guided the Ṣabra-Shatīlah massacres of September 1982.[121]

Less surprising was Ḥizbullah's "tactical alliance" with the ʿArafāt loyalists during the "War of the Camps."[122] The Druze, for their part, distanced themselves morally from Amal and permitted the Palestinians to shell Amal's positions from the hills above Beirut, which were under their control.

The stiff resistance of the Palestinian fighters, the power of endurance of their women, children, and elderly, the wanton and heedless bloodshedding, the military inefficacy of the Amal militia, its defeat in the Sidon region, its capture of only one lightly defended camp in Beirut (that of Ṣabra), its inability to overpower the other camps, and the intensified P.L.O. military buildup forced Asad to step in. At first, on June 18, 1985, he contrived a face-saving truce but, in view of the resumption of the fighting and Amal's sinking fortunes, he eventually—in February 1987—reintroduced his troops into West Beirut. Bending to international pressure and expostulation or censure by his regional allies

(Iran and Libya), he partially eased the plight of the Palestinian refugees in April. But, at his prodding, the Lebanese parliament annulled in May the Cairo Accord of November 3, 1969, which had sanctioned within limits an independent P.L.O. military presence in Lebanon. It was not until January 20, 1988, that his troops took over Amal's positions girding the camps in southern Beirut. The attendant ending of the thirty-two-month siege was represented as a gesture of solidarity with the Intifāḍah, the popular rising in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip against Israeli occupation, which had been under way since December 9, 1987.[123]

The Intifāḍah, the Tenuous 1988 Agreement, and the Continued Divergence of Policies

For a time, it seemed as if Asad and ʿArafāt were headed for a reconciliation. Indeed, the two leaders met in Damascus on April 25, 1988, and, after negotiations by their senior aides, an agreement was reached to pursue a common policy with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. But it is clear from the divergent courses that they subsequently steered that their agreement was too indefinite or too tenuous, and that the difficult problems besetting their relations had remained unresolved.

Asad was ready enough to abandon his bid to undermine the legitimacy of the P.L.O. once he realized its futility. The facts on the ground were too plain to misconstrue or disregard. The P.F.L.P. and the D.F.L.P. had rejoined the P.L.O. in April 1987, and the mass of the rank-and-file Palestinians had clung to it all along. Moreover, the intifāḍah gave the organization a fresh energy. Although it arose in an unpremeditated manner and without any external stimulus, it was clear by this time that the P.L.O. had become its guiding force. In its very first communiqué—that of January 8, 1988—the clandestine "Unified National Command of the Intifāḍah," which consisted of representatives of Fatḥ, the P.F.L.P., the D.F.L.P., and the Palestine Communist Party, identified the P.L.O. as "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."[124] Jordan drew the necessary inferences and disengaged in the same year its legal and administrative links with the West Bank. An internal Israeli intelligence agency assessment would also recognize in March 1989 that there was no "serious leadership" in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip other than that provided by the P.L.O.[125] The Islamic Resistance Movement, Ḥamās—an offshoot of the Muslim Brethren—whose members considered "the land of Palestine as an Islamic waqf—an inalienable endowment—to Muslim generations till the Day of Judgment" and obligated themselves by a "covenant" signed on August 18, 1988 "to raise the banner of God on every inch of Palestine," did not yet carry as much weight as in the period after 1990.[126] The Islamic Jihād, a fundamentalist group that held similar views but had its beginnings in the early 1980s, secured representation in the "Unified National Command" of the uprising in June 1988, if not earlier. Significantly enough, none of the Syrian-supported factions had any

presence in the occupied territories. Of all these factors Asad could not but have been fairly cognizant. Contesting or attempting to undercut the P.L.O.'s legitimacy was self-defeating.

On the issue of the P.L.O.'s freedom of armed action within the areas of Lebanon controlled by Syria, however, Asad was unyielding. This became evident during the fighting that broke out in the refugee camps near Beirut between Fatḥ and Abū Mūsa's militia on May 1, 1988—six days after the Asad-ʿArafāt meeting—and went on intermittently until July 7, with casualty tolls reaching 174 dead and 665 wounded. Although the fighting may have been triggered by local interests or interfactional strains, the support that the Syrian troops and artillery lent to Abū Mūsa's faction was conducive to the defeat of the ʿArafāt loyalists, and their withdrawal from the Beirut area to the ʿAyn Ḥilweh refugee camp in the vicinity of Sidon.[127]

The rise to power among the Maronites of General Michel ʿAwn in September 1988, the military links he forged with Iraq, and his adventurous defiance of Syria gave ʿArafāt's armed followers in southern Lebanon a passing respite. In fact, common apprehensions and the P.L.O.'s own ties to Iraq produced an understanding between ʿAwn and ʿArafāt: the two leaders met in January 1989 in Tunis, and during the recurring clashes between ʿAwn's forces and the Syrian army in the summer and autumn of that year, ʿArafāt did not conceal his support for the Lebanese general.[128] But the reinforcement of Syria's military presence in Lebanon by the Ṭā'if Accords of October 24, 1989, its victory over ʿAwn in October 1990 during the Gulf crisis, and the consolidation of its control by the May 22, 1991, Syrian-Lebanese "Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation, and Coordination" spelled the end, to all intents and purposes, of an independent Palestinian guerrilla presence in Lebanon. There are still, of course, P.L.O. fighters in the country but they no longer possess heavy weapons and, unless active in the underground, function within limits ultimately marked out by Syria.

On one other central issue that had an abiding jarring effect on Palestinian-Syrian relations, namely, the P.L.O.'s tendency to take independent diplomatic initiatives, Asad never gave ground. In this regard he held persistently to the position he had defined at the 1985 Baʿth party congress. He then made plain that from his standpoint the question of Palestine did not concern the Palestinians alone, that in the service of the Palestinian cause Syria had "for decades" engaged "its full human, military, political, and economic potential," and that raising the "slogan" of "the independence of the Palestinian national decision" was "an innovation" and "emptied the Palestinian question of its pan-Arab meaning."[129] This, from Fatḥ's viewpoint, signified in practice that the interests of Asad's regime or, at best, Syria's interests as interpreted by Asad, took precedence over the interests of the P.L.O. or those of the Palestinian people. Fatḥ's leaders had become by this time utterly skeptical about Asad's pan-Arab phraseology which was now, they thought, more in the nature of a manipulative device or a routine lip-service to Baʿthi symbolism. However, an indubitable component of Asad's motivation was his settled belief that so long as the re-

gional balance of power remained in Israel's favor, only inconsequential results could be achieved by diplomacy—hence his concept of "strategic parity" with Israel—and that separate diplomatic moves by the P.L.O. would play into Israel's hand and could produce further Arab splits or weaken Syria's bargaining position.

At bottom, the divergent views of Asad and the P.L.O. and their different responses to the problem of Israeli power stemmed from their disparate objective situations. Asad could afford to bide his time until parity or, at least, a less detrimental balance with Israel would be attained. But the P.L.O.'s constituency, the Palestinian people, were—and are still—held down within and, to no insignificant degree, outside their own country and daily bore—and continue to bear—the brunt of Israel's power. As far as the P.L.O. was concerned, the penalty for inactivity was the death of the organization. The life conditions of its people and its own instinct of self-preservation forced it to exert its utmost on the diplomatic plane as the opportunities for its military option narrowed, thanks in large part to Asad's own efforts.

At any rate, an undertone of Syrian uneasiness could be discerned in the wake of ʿArafāt's stepped-up diplomatic activity in late 1988. Asad coldly received the P.L.O. chairman's speech of December 13 before the U.N. General Assembly in Geneva, in which he condemned "terrorism in all its forms, . . . including state terrorism," accepted U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 and 338, committed the P.L.O. to work for "a comprehensive peaceful settlement between the sides involved in the Arab-Israeli struggle, including the State of Palestine and Israel," and called on "the leaders of Israel" and "the People of the Book," to make peace, "the peace of the brave," "under U.N. auspices."[130] Asad described the policy set forth in this speech as one of concessions. "If we had been in [ʿArafāt's] position," he said, "we would have adopted another method, and if we had seen that his method was the best, we would have pursued it. We have not pursued this course because we do not believe it is the best way to peace."[131] ʿArafāt's speech drew heavier criticism from the Syrian-influenced Palestinian organizations. Abū Mūsa of the rump Fatḥ faction denounced it as "treasonous." As-Ṣāʿiqah tongue-lashed ʿArafāt for "giving in to extortionist American demands" and gratuitously recognizing "the existence of the Zionist entity."[132]

Asad's reaction to the "dialogue" between the United States and the P.L.O., set off by ʿArafāt's speech was somewhat ambivalent. Initially he appears to have had misgivings about it, but in March 1989 he viewed it "as a positive step."[133] In any case, the dialogue reached a blind alley even before it was suspended in June 1990. Indeed it looked as if, by his initiatives, ʿArafāt laid his more important cards on the table and secured nothing in return, as his critics had anticipated.

It is also not without interest that Syria, as a member of the P.L.O. Executive Committee took pains to point out in February 1989, was the only Arab country that did not accord recognition to the Palestinian state proclaimed by the Palestine National Council on November 15, 1988.[134]

Turning a New Page?

With the critical shifts in the structures of international and regional power relations in the early 1990s, it became scarcely consonant with good sense for the P.L.O. and Syria's regime to continue to pull different ways or act at cross purposes. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the related decrease in Syria's access to advanced weapons, the destruction of much of Iraq's capabilities by the U.S. military machine during the Gulf War, and the clear gain redounding to Israel from these developments pointed to an overriding need for a coordination of efforts, at least on the diplomatic front. The P.L.O. was also impelled to seek harmony with Syria by the worsening conditions of the Palestinian people and the impairment of its own position due to the heavier hand of the Likud-led occupying power in the territories, the large-scale migration of Soviet Jews to Israel, the sweeping expulsions of Palestinian laborers and their families from Kuwait, the sharp fall in remittances to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the freezing of aid to the P.L.O. by the oil-rich Gulf monarchies in reprisal for its ambivalent position during the Gulf crisis, and the rise in the influence of the rival fundamentalist organization, Ḥamās, by dint of its continued bankrolling from abroad, its unimpaired ability to provide social services, and the glaring ineffectiveness of the policy of "free concessions" pursued by the P.L.O. from 1988 to 1990.

At long last, in May 1991—almost three months after the end of the Gulf War—Syria and the P.L.O. normalized their relations, and on October 20 Asad and ʿArafāt met in a bid to formulate a common position ahead of the Madrid peace negotiations proposed by the United States. They had two other meetings subsequently, one on November 7 to exchange views on the first round of talks, and the other on April 19, 1993, at the request of Asad, who was anxious to reanimate the peace process and end a four-month standstill over Israel's deportation of about four hundred Palestinians to a desolate area in southern Lebanon.[135]

ʿArafāt Goes His Own Way

The distrust between the P.L.O. and Syria's regime, if tempered, did not die out. In the course of the peace talks the Israelis, led from June 1992 to May 1996 by the Laborites—a party more moderate and less rigid than the Likud—tried to turn this distrust to account by leaving the impression at one point that they were opting for a deal with the Palestinians and keeping the Syrians out in the cold, and at another point that they were going for a Syria-first negotiating strategy and giving the Palestinians the run-around.

At first neither the Palestinians nor the Syrians allowed the Israelis to play them off against one another. Asad openly rejected "separate" or "partial" deals or "transitional" or "half solutions," and insisted on "a total peace for a total

withdrawal" from the Golan Heights and other occupied Arab territories.[136] But in May 1993, while adhering unswervingly to the latter formula, he allowed for the possibility of differing paces on the different negotiation tracks. Should this lead to an agreement on one track earlier than on the others, he signaled that he would be prepared to consider whether signing it at that stage would enhance the prospects of a comprehensive peace and would serve the interests of every party to the negotiation. He linked this mode of procedure, however, to the offering of "guarantees" that there would be commensurate progress on the other tracks. "We would," he added, "take also other considerations into account."[137]

As to ʿArafāt, he eventually shifted for himself, allowing protracted back-channel talks with Israel in Norway in 1993, which he kept secret not only from Syria and other Arab states but also from most of his top aides. This process led in the same year to the working out on August 19 of a draft accord at Oslo, which was made public on August 31, and to the related exchange of letters of mutual recognition between Israel and the P.L.O. on September 9 and the signing in Washington four days later of the "Declaration of Principles" on limited Palestinian home rule. Subsequently, the implementation process produced three interim agreements, that of February 9, 1994, which defined the powers of the Palestinian authority, arranged for the security of Jewish settlers in Gaza, and gave ultimate control to the Israelis at border crossings; that of May 4, 1994, which provided for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Jericho and the Gaza Strip and elaborated on the authority the Palestinians would enjoy in these areas; and, finally, the agreement of September 28, 1995, which committed Israel to the extension of the control of the Palestinians over their internal affairs in the Arab neighborhoods of Hebron, in all the urban districts of the other West Bank population centers, and in the surrounding Arab villages, subject to Israel's veto power on many significant government functions, its "overriding responsibility" in rural areas, its continued military presence in various parts of the West Bank, and the establishment of links between the security organs of the two sides.[138] The thorniest issues—the transformation of the semi-autonomous Palestinian authority into a sovereign state, the demarcation of the final borders with Israel, the status of East Jerusalem, the future of the West Bank Jewish settlers, and the fate of the millions of Palestinian refugees—were to be dealt with in future final status talks but, with the coming to power in 1996 of the ultranationalist Likud block, the likelihood of their being resolved by negotiations has been set at hazard.

Clearly, ʿArafāt's methods of negotiation differs markedly from that of Asad, who will not consent to any deal with Israel unless the precise terms not only of each step but also of the final outcome are spelled out beforehand and any uncertainty is avoided. But the difference in ʿArafāt's mode of procedure is essentially explicable by his different objective situation, and the more pressing problems and intense suffering of the Palestinian people.

As could be expected, Asad showed displeasure at not being privy to the P.L.O.'s 1993 secret negotiations with Israel. As to their outcome, he in effect

felt that ʿArafāt, by breaking the linkage between the Syrian-Israeli and the Palestinian-Israeli tracks, had allowed Israel to hold the high cards. In an opinion he expressed on September 20, 1993, he maintained that the P.L.O. lost, the Arabs lost, and only Israel gained.[139] But a fortnight earlier, on September 5—that is, before the exchange of letters of mutual recognition between Israel and the P.L.O.—he consented to receive ʿArafāt in Damascus and signaled that he would not oppose the deal, provided ʿArafāt would secure the endorsement of the Palestinian people, whose right to make their decisions he respected.[140] At the same time he continued his support not only of the group of Aḥmad Jibrīl, which asserted on September 10 that "ʿArafāt's journey will come to a sad end," but also of the rump Fatḥ faction, led by Colonel Abū Mūsa, which on the same day charged ʿArafāt with "treason" and sanctioned "the shedding of his blood."[141]

But more illuminative of Asad's involved and elastic tactics are the "amicable ties" he had established in 1992 or 1993 with the fundamentalist Ḥamās, which rejected the peace talks out-and-out and clung to its view that "Palestine is an Islamic land from the sea to the river, no part of which can be lawfully given up . . . by any organization . . . or ruler or cluster of rulers."[142] Queried about his ties with Ḥamās, Asad replied: "There is nothing here that is strange. Different forces with their own distinct views have play. Sometimes common factors, or at least the absence of contradictions allow these forces to coexist . . . or cooperate."[143]

As for the Syrian-Israeli talks, Asad agreed in 1994 that they should be taken up again, but from that year till the May 1996 Israeli elections they crawled on inconclusively, even though the course he steered was far from inflexible. Thus on January 16, 1994, at Geneva, in the presence of the U.S. President Bill Clinton, he characterized peace with Israel as "a strategic choice" for Syria and called for "normal peaceful relations" and "a genuine peace" that would secure "the interests of both sides."[144] Again, in late 1994 and in 1995, he consented to upgrading the dialogue to include face-to-face negotiations on as high a level as that of the two countries' chiefs of staff, and on matters of detail such as security and demilitarized zones, but insisted through his minister for foreign affairs that the related arrangements be "balanced, parallel, and equal."[145]

Initially, all he could get from the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, through the Israeli participants in the negotiations, was a commitment to a "partial" or "phased" pull-back from the Golan Heights in exchange for a "full peace."[146] Later, in July 1994, it would seem, as Asad and his ambassador to the United States maintained in 1996, that Rabin privately agreed to Israel's withdrawal from the Golan "up to the 4 June 1967 lines."[147] This appears to be corroborated by a September 1994 Israeli army radio report to the effect that Israel had consented to "a complete evacuation" of the Golan within three years. However, in a public "clarification" of the report on September 8, Rabin signified that "we are not prepared to commit ourselves regarding the depth of the withdrawal before the Syrians agree to the number of years over which it will continue." "This," he went on, "must be more than three years, because three years is for the first line only."[148] Moreover, at successive stages of the talks, he

and his successor Shimon Peres hemmed whatever they acceded to with other preconditions, such as an Israeli "referendum" on any pull-back, the establishment of an Israeli monitoring station on the Golan's strategic Mount Hermon, the control of water resources in the occupied territory, and the setting for this purpose of Israel's frontiers east of the current line of demarcation; and all these preconditions were invariably contingent upon prior pledges by Syria to a full peace, in stages, with diplomatic relations, open borders, the free flow of people and merchandise, and other requirements.[149]

The Israeli position came under strong criticism by the Syrian press. *Ath-Thawrah* was particularly averse to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's 1995 assertion that "not a single centimeter of the Golan" would be given up without submitting the issue to a decision by Israeli voters. "To conduct a referendum on lands belonging to another people," *ath-Thawrah* said, "is impermissible . . . and contemptuous of the resolution of the Security Council which had declared the annexation of the Golan by Israel null and void."[150] As late as February 1996 *Tishrīn* deplored Israel's sending "contradictory signals" and making "disabling" conditions that could only hinder the peace process.[151] But Asad's reluctance to involve Syria in normalization measures in step with only a partial pull-out and in the absence of a clear-cut pledge to a complete withdrawal from the Golan by Israel, and the decision by the new Premier Shimon Peres to call Israeli elections in late May also contributed to putting the process on ice. The coming to power of Binyamin Netanyahu of the Likud party and his rejection of the land for peace formula have decreased the possibility of any understanding between Syria and Israel in the foreseeable future.

Pulling Together Again

The passing of the reins of government in Israel into the hands of the Likud was not long in raising up new difficulties for the Palestinians and flinging fresh obstacles across the path toward peace that ʿArafāt and Peres had partially cleared.

As far back as December 2, 1948, in an open letter to the *New York Times*, twenty-eight American Jews of high repute, including the eminent scientist Albert Einstein, identified Herut, which was then led by Menachem Begin and is now the key element in the Likud, as "a political party closely akin in its organization, methods, political philosophy and social appeal to the Nazi and Fascist parties." Within the Jewish community, they went on, it advocated "an admixture of ultra-nationalism, religious mysticism and racial superiority."[152] This faithfully characterizes the nature of the contemporary and subsequent attitude of its chauvinist members toward the Palestinians and their course of conduct in the occupied territories since their reassumption of power in May 1996.

From the "facts" that the Likud-led government has been creating on the ground in Arab East Jerusalem—its appropriation of Arab tracts of land, its

stepped-up destruction of "unlicensed" Arab houses, its increase of the number of Jewish settlers, its demolition of an Arab community center for the disabled, its closure of Arab establishments that provided sorely needed money for housing repairs, its opening of al-Aqṣa tunnel in the dead hours of the night, and its pressing forward with the project to build a new neighborhood for 30,000 Jews in the city's Arab part on the hill known as Jabal Abū Ghnaym or as Hebraically renamed, Har Homa—it is difficult to escape the conclusion that it is bent on inflicting its will on the Palestinians by force and arrogating to itself the whole sovereignty in Jerusalem, even though most of the nations of the world still regard Jerusalem as a disputed city and the fate of its eastern part was, under the Oslo accords, to be determined in final status talks.

Similarly, Israel's redeployment under the Hebron protocol of January 15, 1997, from only about 80 percent of Hebron and its maintenance of full security control in the remaining part as well as its peremptory interdiction, by military order, of construction or renovation of any building by Palestinians in the latter zone—which includes the entire old city and in which the Palestinians constitute the overwhelming majority—suggest that, from the standpoint of the Likud-led cabinet, the interests and needs of the city's more than 120,000 Palestinian inhabitants are of inferior account compared to the interests and sensitivities of its 450 Jewish settlers.[153]

In sharp contrast to Netanyahu's chauvinist and short-sighted treatment of the Palestinians is the call on May 17, 1998, by former Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres for a recognition by Israel of a Palestinian state. "We don't have the moral right," Peres said, "to dominate another people. They are entitled to their own lives, their own respect and independence."[154]

The new circumstances, the yielding to the Palestinian authority so far of no more than a circumscribed autonomy in small, discontinuous, and disconnected enclaves, and Binyamin Netanyahu's resolve to preclude Palestinian statehood, revoke the Labor government's restraints on the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank,[155] press on with the expropriation of Palestinian land for bypass roads and security perimeters around these settlements, impose his own interpretation of past agreements and his own view of the schedule and extent of future withdrawals or, to use ʿArafāt's own words, "transform negotiations into dictations,"[156] and last but not least, Netanyahu's attempt to turn the police force of the Palestinian Authority into an adjunct of the Israeli army and saddle it, as the Syrian newspaper *Tishrīn* put it, with "a role analogous" to that played by the Israeli-sponsored army of Antoine Lahad in Israel's self-declared "security zone" in southern Lebanon[157]—all these factors spurred ʿArafāt to mend his fences with Asad. As early as July 25, 1996, aided by Egyptian mediation efforts, he met with Syria's president in Latakia. Both agreed on the need for a unified Arab stand during the next phase of the peace process. ʿArafāt also endorsed the long-standing Syrian desire for a total Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, while Asad upheld the aspiration of the Palestinians for a state of their own on the whole of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.[158] Subsequently, Asad may have been

averse to the acceptance by ʿArafāt of the inequitable interim Hebron protocol, but to their consensual ultimate aims the two leaders have clung unswervingly.

Some Conclusions

What light do the particulars of the relations between Asad and the mainstream Fatḥ from 1966 to 1997 throw on Asad's qualities, aims, and techniques?

If anything, they confirm the view of him as a leader with a special aptitude for political tactics and a master of the art of dividing opponents and pitting them against one another to his own ultimate advantage. In Lebanon, the scene of recurring clashes of interests between Fatḥ and Syria's regime, Asad, as has been amply shown, successively gave support and dealt blows by straightforward or roundabout means to every major element involved in the civil war, and drove wedges in the ranks of the two sides to the conflict, weakening in due course both of them and altering the local balance of forces in his favor. Similarly, when he had difficulty bending the P.L.O. to his purposes, he activated the Palestinian factions answerable to him and through them attempted to win over independent Palestinian organizations—the P.F.L.P. and the D.F.L.P.—with a view to undermining Fatḥ and paralyzing its leading role; and, when opportunity offered, he fostered a split within Fatḥ itself. However, as the 1985–1986 phase of the "War of the Camps" showed, Asad was not always able to use Palestinian factions—even those closest to him—against Fatḥ at will. He could best manipulate them at points when their mutual conflicts and conflicts between him and Fatḥ coincided.

The history of relations between Asad and Fatḥ also leaves the impression that in the areas he sought to bring under his influence, he appeared uncomfortable with allies who were not his instruments or, to put it differently, he seemed to believe that only his creatures were safe or trustworthy allies.

In the course of his struggle for power in Lebanon, Asad struck alliances or built bridges, sometimes consecutively sometimes simultaneously, with pan-Arab and particularist groups, with secular and Islamic forces, and with parties on the left and parties on the right of the political spectrum. It is difficult to explain his choice of allies at any one point or his shifts in alignments by other than pure power considerations, even though Asad almost invariably covered his moves with a pan-Arab cloak. Indeed, one can scarcely escape the conclusion that with him pan-Arabism, that is, the unification of the Arab people, as distinct from a mere coordination of the efforts of the Arab states, particularly vis-à-vis Israel, has increasingly receded as an end or as an intellectual conviction and had become more symbolism than substance, or a sheer technique. At any rate neither the international distribution of power nor Syria's own strength or resources make possible, at least in this phase of Arab history, a transcendence of the divergent interests and orientations of Arab regimes or the shaping of events along pan-Arab lines.

Another thing that the facts set forth in this chapter reveal is a streak of

ruthlessness in Asad. Although he can be very flexible in the pursuit of his goals, and under favorable circumstances will give diplomacy the chance to do the work of arms, he is also capable of bringing into play brute and relentless force if his authority is at stake or a basic line of his policy is challenged. The unusual violence with which he treated the historic city of Ḥamāh when its Muslim Brethren rose in rebellion against him in 1982 showed that his own subjects were no less victimized by this strain in his politics than the Palestinians in the Battle of Tripoli in 1983 and in the "War of the Camps" in 1985–1987. The cry in 1983 of a Palestinian woman amid the ruined homes and the fallen women and children from the shelling coming from Syrian positions south of Tripoli is unforgettable. "Ḥāfiz al Asad," she screamed, "is more Israeli than the Israelis!"

But there is no question that for him Israel is a source of apprehension and its military power his biggest worry, even though at several points, notably in 1976 and 1983, Asad and the Israelis had, for their own different reasons, the weakening of the P.L.O. as a common preoccupation. In fact, much of Asad's attitude toward the P.L.O. could be explained in terms of the principal regional end he had set for himself and that he single-mindedly pursued, that of containing and counterbalancing Israel's power—which, from his standpoint, necessitates a sufficient degree of control over the forces active in neighboring Lebanon, his soft underbelly militarily speaking, the more so because of his realization that he is not strong enough to take on Israel and that a thoughtless initiative by any uncontrolled element could bring his own army into incalculable danger.

Although he succeeded in becoming the arbiter of Lebanon's fate, at least for the time being, and in depriving the P.L.O. of its heavy weapons and of any serious independent military role in Lebanon, he failed in turning the P.L.O. into a pawn on his diplomatic chessboard. One reason for this is the wide net of relations that the P.L.O.'s leaders established in the Arab world and the use they made of the jealousies and frictions dividing the Arab governments. Another reason was the geographical dispersal of the P.L.O.'s constituency, the Palestinian people, most of whom are beyond Asad's reach.

Asad obviously has an alert and nimble mind, and as his course of conduct since 1990 suggests, he is open to new circumstances and new concepts. His involvement in the U.S.-sponsored peace process shows an ability to temporize and bend his ideas to contingencies, but it is possible at the same time to discern a certain skepticism on his part as to the outcome of the talks, in view of Israel's preponderant military power and the perceived difficulty of detaching the government of the United States from the interests of Israel or from its indifference to Arab rights.

The whole experience of the Palestinians (and the Lebanese) with Asad and with the Israelis confirms—due allowance being given for the influence of knowledge and mental skills—the ancient truth about the unenviable role of inadequate power or powerlessness in a world ruled by force or, to use the words uttered in the fifth century B.C. and attributed by the historian Thucydides to the Athenian ambassadors to Melos: "You know and we know, as practical

men, that the question of justice arises only between parties equal in strength and that the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must."[159] This remains true, notwithstanding all the prattle about a "new world order."

Finally, it is necessary to remind the reader that the opinions I expressed or the inferences I made in this, as in the other, chapters are based on the available sources and are unavoidably tentative in their nature. Access to the internal archives of Syria's regime or of other governments could lead to different interpretations. Even so, it should be kept in mind that all interpretations entail, if inadvertently, an element of subjectivity. In this connection it is worthwhile recalling the observation made by the Dutch historian Pieter Geyl in 1944. "History," he said, "is . . . an argument without end."[160]

CHAPTER 25

Epilogue

In this work, which has its main focus on the basic features and interconnections of Syria's rural society, the Baʿthist movement, and the country's post-1963 structures of power, I have avoided academic phraseology because it is beyond the reach of the general reader and sometimes obscures rather than clarifies hard facts and the underlying realities. I have also abstained from broad, all-encompassing abstractions and confined my analysis to a modest level of generality. I have not attempted to compare rural and political processes in Syria with those in other parts of the "Third World." Such a comparison would, of course, be valuable, but it presupposes a deep knowledge of many different peasant societies and political structures in different cultural and historical contexts, a knowledge that I cannot claim.

It would be pointless to reiterate here all the low-level general inferences drawn in this book. From a close reading of its pages, it should be clear that in many chapters the chosen model involved a progress from generalizations to the pertinent corroborative empirical evidence. It would, therefore, suffice now to highlight the firmer and more significant conclusions.

If anything is incontrovertible about Syria's rural society, it is that during the centuries of Ottoman rule and down to the immediate postindependence period—but decreasingly since the great Syrian revolt of 1925–1927 against the French Mandate and the founding by Akram Ḥūrānī in 1950 of the Arab Socialist party—the peasants did not constitute a homogeneous or cohesive social group. They differed in their historical experience, religious loyalties, social outlook, economic interests, and responses to hardships, importunities, or sheer oppression by absentee landlords, tax farmers, money lenders, the bigger tribal shaykhs, or the government of the day. As has been elaborated at appropriate points, they were distinguishable into sharecroppers, wage earners, and peasant proprietors with small or middle-size holdings; mobile mushāʿ or communally farming peasants and peasants with fixed habitations; spirited and defiant montane peasants of warrior background and more vulnerable plainsmen disposed to circumspect modes of resistance; peasants with strong or weakening clan ties and peasants linked only territorially; peasants associated with the main Sunni religious current and peasants adhering to diverse Muslim "heterodox" sects or to the Christian faith; peasants belonging to ṣūfī or mystic fraternities and peasants with no such affiliations; and, finally, "peasant-gardeners" who enjoyed the benefits of occupational combination as early as the seventeenth century, if not earlier, and "agricultural peasants" who were organized for economic and political ends only in recent decades.

Reflecting the intertwining of salient events in this century with processes of

the more distant past is the fact that Akram Ḥūrānī, who was the first Syrian leader in modern history to center attention on the peasants and their hard and untended lives, and to reach out to cultivators of all identities and denominations in the hope of welding them into an effective political force and keying them toward an emphasis on their common Arab roots, descended from a family of religious shaykhs that founded the Rifāʿī mystic order in the fifteenth century in the Ḥamāh region—an order that gained wide acceptance in the Syrian countryside on account of its primary orientation toward the peasants, its assiduity in serving the poorer in their ranks, and the rural background of many of its principal Syrian duʿāt or propagators. But it must be added that Ḥūrānī himself was strongly opposed to the passiveness and social inertia that the order had tended to encourage.

Again, it is no historical accident that in Ḥamāh proper Ḥūrānī and his party drew their basic support from the erstwhile occupationally integrated "peasant-gardeners" of al-ʿUlayliyyāt quarter that in Ottoman days lay outside the city's walls.

Of greater import is the encouragement Ḥūrānī gave to many of his young partisans from rural or urban families of middle or humble status to enroll in the cost-free Ḥimṣ Military Academy and gain a footing in the officers corps. Although he would admit in 1970 that experience had taught him that "any military coup is adverse to Syria's interest and to democracy,"[1] his tendency in the 1940s and 1950s to urge his younger supporters toward a military career proved to be, in retrospect, a significant contributory factor to the mastery that elements of rural origin came in due course to wield over the armed forces, and eventually over the state. But what above all assisted this process is the preponderance of men of peasant stock among the noncommissioned officers and the army's rank-and-file draftees, which is less explicable by the fact that cultivators formed prior to the middle 1960s a distinct majority of the economically active population than by a 1953 decree that allowed Syrians to buy exemption from compulsory military service for 500 Syrian pounds, that is, for $140 at the contemporary free market rate, an amount poor peasants could not afford. Their lot had been altering for the worse by dint of the rural overpopulation, the larger underemployment, the greater pressure on the means of subsistence, the increasing application to agriculture of labor-saving power-driven machinery, the extraction by absentee landlords or owners of capital of higher proportions of the produce, and the loss by sharecroppers on many farms of their long-standing customary rights of occupancy—factors that not only rendered it difficult for the humbler peasants to escape conscription, or drove them to view permanent military service as an alternative and more rewarding source of income, but also heightened their susceptibility to the ideas and agenda of Ḥūrānī and his Arab Socialist party.

On the general level, another evidentially strong conclusion bears emphasis: historically Baʿthism did not represent a single force but a plurality of elements which, though interrelated in various ways, had different social goals and mental horizons. In essence, the earliest Baʿth—that of 1943–1952—was not peas-

ant-oriented but wedded to the ideal of pan-Arabism. Its principal founders were sons of urban bawaykiyyah or wholesale grain dealers, and grew up in surroundings that fostered receptivity to the pan-Arab leanings characteristic of many of the members not only of the urban intelligentsia but also of the mercantile class, to whom the break-up after 1917 of the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire entailed a grave impediment to the free flow of native commerce and the economic viability of the fragmented territories. The adherence to the Baʿth in the middle 1940s of many of the younger ʿAlawī refugees who had lost their homes in the wake of the 1939 annexation by Turkey of the predominantly Arab district of Alexandretta, imbued the party's pan-Arab feeling with greater fervor. The unhappy fate of the Palestinians in the late 1940s had a similar but more intense effect by virtue of the wider dimension of their tragedy and its more grievous consequences.

It was only after the old Baʿth's formal "merger" with Ḥūrānī's Arab Socialists in 1952 that the tillers of the soil came discernibly within its range of vision. But the "merger" was more an alliance of leaders than an integration at the grass-roots level. Ḥūrānī's numerous peasant followers continued to look to him for guidance. In fact, the old Baʿth never implanted itself deeply in the villages. However, it contributed significantly to the growth of a politically conscious rural intelligentsia. Many of the students in its ranks and teachers in its cadres were of peasant or rural extraction, and had been won over by its strong animus against social injustice and discrimination between the sects.

By contrast, the "transitional" main-stream Baʿthists of the 1960s accorded from the outset a high priority to the peasants and their concerns. They markedly raised the share of the produce due to the landless underclass, reduced further the permissible size of private landholdings, speeded up the redistribution of the land expropriated under agrarian reform laws, and freed peasant beneficiaries from three-fourths of the price of the land and in some areas from any payment whatever. They also intensified the organizing drive among the peasants that Ḥūrānī had launched, setting on foot in the second half of the decade peasant unions in more than 1,500 villages.

Unlike the old Baʿth, whose leaders and activists were invariably civilians, until 1967 the "transitional" Baʿth rested ultimately on an uneasy alliance within the armed forces between varying groups that shared similar rural roots and similar rural orientations, and embraced ʿAlawis from the provinces of Latakia, Ḥimṣ, and Ḥamāh, Ismāʿīlis from Maṣyāf and Salamiyyah, Druze from the Arab Mountain, and Sunnis from the Ḥawrān region and the district of Dayr-iz-Zūr, and from different small country towns. But the real center of gravity of the party and its regime in that period was the inner core of the secret Baʿth Military Committee and of its successor, the Baʿth Military Bureau. Its members stemmed in their majority not from the landless sharecroppers or other unprivileged peasants but from the middle or lesser rural or village notability, which had been on the rise socially since the 1930s mainly as a result of the creation by the French colonial government of special semi-autonomous areas, as in the Druze Mountain and the ʿAlawi territory, and its

related policy of shoring up the rural notables and balancing the countryside against the cities.

In 1968 the alliance between the various rural military groups, which had been beset from 1963 onward by internal strains, broke down, giving way to the decisive dominance of the armed forces by a faction in which ʿAlawi military officers had the upper hand. These officers had themselves not been free from ruptures and soon split up again. An unstable "power dualism" ensued, with one group, led by General Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, holding the reins within the civilian wing of the party and pressing for further internal structural changes, and the other, under General Ḥāfiz al-Asad, wielding control over most of the crucial units in the armed forces and giving priority, in the wake of the dire outcome of the 1967 war, to national security concerns. "Power dualism" lasted until 1970 when Asad, having deepened his military base of support, emerged triumphant.

In his socioeconomic policies Asad has been from the outset in essence a consensus builder. From this basic bent he was only temporarily deflected during the troublous years of the armed insurrection by Islamic militants. Although persisting in his heed to the desires of the peasants, he had early come to the view that one effective way of holding the country together and imparting durability to his power was to build bridges with the urban merchants and industrialists and give them a stake in his regime. He thus allowed them to rise to a greater role in the country's economy, at first in a moderate way but more meaningfully since the middle 1980s. He also supported the enactment of laws in the early 1990s encouraging private investment and markedly scaling down the tax liability on net profits from business. But in adopting this policy he was also driven by the constraining power of unfavorable economic circumstances and the need for effective remedial measures.

Under Asad the character of the Baʿth changed. For one thing, it became, in a numerical sense, a mass party. Its total membership greatly increased, rising to 1,008,243 in 1992. Its auxiliary organizations also spread out widely. Its peasant associations, for example, had by 1992 taken roots in 5,061 villages and by 1995 incorporated 801,230 members, that is, in all probability, no fewer than 95 percent of all Syrians active in agriculture, excluding employers. But the growing size of the party did not translate into a political force with stronger leverage on the holders of real power or greater influence on crucial decision making. Whatever independence of opinion its members enjoyed in the past was now curtailed, a premium being placed on conformity and internal discipline. The party became in effect another instrument by which the regime sought to control the community at large or to rally it behind its policies. The party's active cadres turned more and more into bureaucrats and careerists, and were no longer as vibrantly alive ideologically as in the 1950s or 1960s, unconditional fidelity to Asad having ultimately overriden fidelity to the old beliefs.

Such an outcome was largely a by-product of Asad's success in institutionalizing his power. He in effect built a flexible four-tiered structure, and thereby imparted stability to his eventually uncontested preeminence. By contrast, in the period when the Baʿth was a party in transition, his main rivals in

the Military Committee or Military Bureau were unable to organize their power in an effective way, buffeted as they were by internal conflicts and the shock of the 1967 war. For their part, the leaders of the old Baʿth never wielded decisive power, even though at one point or another they filled high posts, including that of prime minister.

It is only at the top level of the present political structure that power is primary. Here Asad alone holds the sinews of real authority. In all crucial matters the last word is with him. At all the other levels power, as has been detailed in earlier chapters, is merely of derivative significance. Even so, at congresses of the Baʿth party or the Peasants' Associations or the Workers' General Union, or at meetings of the People's Assembly or the Chambers of Commerce or Industry, a degree of openness or temperate criticism is allowed on all issues of direct concern to their constituents. The criticism is never aimed at Asad or his basic orientation, but at derivative lines of policy or at executory measures or methods by subordinates. By this means Asad feels out the people's temper. It is also one of the ways by which he keeps his underlings in check.

At the same time, it is necessary not to lose sight of the more subtle forms of influence exercised by elements outside the formal power loop, such as the bigger merchants or industrialists. Apart from their success in imbuing upper officials in state institutions relevant to their pursuits with the spirit of gain by which they themselves are actuated, of direct bearing as a source of their influence is their money, much of which is stowed away in foreign bank accounts far beyond the grasp of a regime eager to entice it back.

It must also be kept in mind that the whole power structure rests ultimately not on the regular armed forces but on the politically relevant regime-shielding elite military units whose commanders are Asad's hand-picked appointees and have little independent standing. Without his weight on their side, they would not count for much.

A number of other facts are worth highlighting. Out of the thirty-one officers whom Asad singled out between 1970 and 1997 for prominent or key posts in the armed forces, the elite military units, and the intelligence and security networks, no fewer than nineteen were drawn from his ʿAlawi sect, including eight from his own tribe and four others from his wife's tribe; and of the latter twelve, as many as seven from kinsmen closely linked to him by ties of blood or marriage. Moreover, out of the nineteen ʿAlawis, eleven descended, as in the case of the majority of the members of the Baʿth Military Committee of the 1960s, from the lesser rural or village notability which, while not affluent, enjoyed esteem or influence among the local peasants.

The men with whom a leader surrounds himself often provide a clue to his bent of mind. But although it is clear that Asad, in his pursuit of safety or firmness of tenure, deems it prudent to have at the core of his power base ʿAlawis or kinsmen, it would be going too far to infer that he is sectarian or tribal in his outlook or line of conduct. There is little evidence that the majority of his coreligionists or fellow tribesmen enjoy more of the comforts of life or suffer less from the stresses of fortune than the majority of the Syrian people.

The power structure that Asad shaped is, obviously, highly personalized. There is no denying that it depends to a significant degree on his political resourcefulness and undoubted skill in manipulating circumstances or harnessing forces to his needs or splitting up, outmaneuvering, and overcoming all internal opponents. Indeed, many Syrians wonder whether the power structure will outlive him or come apart from the top downward after he is gone. It is difficult to predict unerringly the consequences of his death, of course. In such a pass much depends on the attendant conjuncture of internal and regional circumstances.

There remains the question of whether the peasants have fared better since the mid-1960s, that is, since rural elements have come to the fore politically. In 1991, in referring to the qualitative changes that the Syrian village had undergone, the head of the Peasants' General Union portrayed the Asad era as "the peasants' golden age." With the well-being of the greater number of the tillers of the soil in mind, would it be proper to affirm that he was mythologizing? Or does his portrayal have any foundation in fact?

The diffusion of education and trained agriculturists in the countryside, the spread of rural health centers and mobile medical units, the marked rise in life expectancy, the faster and more dependable system of transport and communications, the increase in the pace of peasant mobility, the electrification of more than 95 percent of Syria's villages, and the exemption of the agricultural classes from the income tax and, since 1992, from the profits tax and recently from the imposts on exported agricultural products—all these factors, notwithstanding attendant problems, contributed directly or indirectly to the enhancement of the life chances and the standard of living of a great number of peasants.

At the same time, despite the susceptibility of the regime to the views and grievances of the rank-and-file cultivators, there is little doubt that disparities in agricultural income persist and have been, if anything, on the rise since the inception in 1972—and the stepping up in the early 1990s, even if half-heartedly—of the process of economic liberalization and the concomitant partial loosening of central controls over the economy. Significantly, under Asad there has been no effort, as far as can be ascertained, to collect systematic data on the distribution of agricultural income among the landless laborers, the small landed peasants, the middle husbandmen, and the rich farmers and mustathmirs or investors. As for the distribution of private landholdings, the only available figures—those for 1970–1971—indicate that the main beneficiaries of the major agrarian reform measures were not the small but the middle peasants, from whom stemmed many of the chief figures of both the Asad regime and that of the "transitional" Baʿthists of the 1960s. Excluding landholdings that are partly owned and partly leased, which accounted for less than 9 percent of the total area of private landholdings, middling landowners, that is, owners of 10 to 100 hectares, constituted in 1970–1971 only 23.8 percent—and owners of less than 10 hectares as much as 75.4 percent—of all landowners, but the former had title to 58.7 percent, and the latter to only 23.5 percent—of the entire area of fully owned agricultural land. Disparities in leaseholdings were even more glar-

ing: 1.9 percent of all leaseholders held 35.3 percent of all land under lease.[2] From an economic standpoint, landownership appears now to be of less value than the ability to bring capital or modern technology to bear upon agricultural production. This explains why in the countryside the capitalized machine-owning landed farmers or leaseholding mustathmirs increasingly have the edge over the other agricultural classes.

It is undeniable that there is still poverty among many peasants at the low end of the income scale, but not to as distressing a degree as in the first half of this century. If the regime adapts its policies more and more to the rising trend of economic globalization, however, the life chances of these peasants are very likely to deteriorate. Evidence gathered by researchers at the United States-based Institute for Policy Studies show that, as a result of the progress of globalization and "free" trade, "the combined wealth of the world's 447 billionaires is greater than the income of the poorest half of the world's people," and that the phenomenon is neglecting, marginalizing, or inflicting harm on "at least two-thirds" of the world's population and "destroying viable rural communities."[3] This lends much substance to the remarks made by Saʿdallah Wannūs in the stirring speech he delivered on World Theater Day at U.N.E.S.C.O.'s International Theater Institute in Paris on March 27, 1996, one year before his death. "Unfortunately," said Wannūs, a Syrian playwright and a native of Ḥusayn al-Baḥr, a village in the province of Ṭarṭūs, "the globalization that is taking shape at the end of this century . . . seems to be . . . widening the gap between the obscenely rich and the destitutely poor . . . (and) mercilessly destroying all forms of cohesion within societies, breaking them up into individual lonely and depressed souls."[4]

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A P P E N D I X

Members of The Syrian Baʿth Party (Regional) Commands, 1963–1997

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*Number of Terms Elected*	*Year of Birth*	*Place of Birth*	*Religion and Sect*
Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī, secretary general (1963–1964)	Sept. 1963–Feb. 1964	1	1935	Ṣalkhad, a provincial town in the Druze Mountain	Druze
Khālid al-Ḥakīm	Sept. 1963–Feb. 1964	1	1931[a]	Dūmā	Muslim Sunnī
Nūr-ud-Dīn al-Atāsī, secretary general (formally only, 1966–1970)	Sept. 1963–Dec. 1965 Mar. 1966–Nov. 1970	8	1929	Ḥimṣ	Muslim Sunnī
Maḥmūd Nawfal	Sept. 1963–Feb. 1964	1	1934	Shahbāʾ (Druze Mountain)	Druze
Aḥmad Abū Ṣāleḥ	Sept. 1963–Feb. 1964	1	1928[a]	Aleppo	Muslim Sunnī
Ḥamad ʿUbayd	Sept. 1963–Dec. 1965	4	1928	As-Suwaydāʾ (Druze Mountain)	Druze
Ḥāfiz al-Asad, secretary general (1971 to the present)	Sept. 1963–Apr. 1965 Mar. 1966 to the present	12	1930	al-Qirdāḥah, a village in the Jablah District	Muslim ʿAlawī
Muḥammad Rabbāḥ aṭ-Ṭawīl	Sept. 1963–Dec. 1965 Mar. 1966–Nov. 1970	7	1933	Latakia (Aṣ-Ṣlaybeh quarter)	Muslim Sunnī
Amīn al-Ḥāfiz, secretary general (1964–1965)	Feb. 1964–Dec. 1965	3	1921	Aleppo (al-Bayyāḍah quarter)	Muslim Sunnī

(Continued)

Occupation	*Education*	*Class Origin*
Secondary school teacher; member, Revolutionary Command Council 1963–1964	Licentiate Arabic literature, Damascus University	Middle landed peasantry; son of a locally influential middle peasant and man of religion
Bus driver; labor union leader; president, General Federation of Labor Unions 1963–1964	Elementary	From a family of peasant-gardening ḍammānīn[b] turned truck proprietors; son of a truck proprietor
Surgeon; minister of interior 1963–1964; deputy premier 1964–1965; president of Republic 1966–1970; premier 1968–1970; in prison from 1970 to 1994?	Medical school Damascus	From a less affluent branch of Ḥimṣ's principal landed family; son of a middle landowner (or owner of about 1,000 dunums)
Engineer; professor of engineering, Aleppo University	Doctorate in engineering from Soviet Union	Middle landed peasantry; son of a landed peasant
Lawyer; minister of public works 1963; minister of communications 1963–1964	School of Law, Aleppo University	Lower religious middle class; son of a religious shaykh
Commander, Nationalist Guard and Desert Forces, 1963; commander 72nd Armored Brigade at Qaṭanā 1964–1965; minister of defense Sept.–Dec. 1965	Ḥimṣ Military Academy	Middling landed rural notability; son of a "martyr" of the 1925–1927 rebellion
Commander of Air Force 1964–1971; minister of Defense 1966–1972; premier 1970–1971; president of Republic since March 1971	Ḥimṣ Military Academy; flight training in Soviet Union	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant and leader of al-ʿĀylah quarter from al-Kalbiyyah tribe
Commander, Army General Headquarters garrison 1963–1965; commander, Qaṭanā military camp, 1966 and of People's Army 1968; minister of labor and social affairs, 1966–1968; minister of interior 1968–1970, in prison since 1971?	Ḥimṣ Military Academy	Middle landed class; son of a religious shaykh and notable of the Ṣlaybeh quarter, who was a friend of Jamāl Pasha, commander of Ottoman 4th Army and de facto ruler of Syria 1914–1918
Schoolteacher in 1940s; head of military academy, Ḥimṣ 1957–1958; president, R.C.C. (later Presidency Council); com-	Ḥimṣ Military Academy	Petty official (lower middle) class; son of a policeman

(Continued)

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*Number of Terms Elected*	*Year of Birth*	*Place of Birth*	*Religion and Sect*
Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, assistant secretary general but de facto chief of party (1965–1970)	Feb. 1964–Dec. 1965 Mar. 1966–Nov. 1970	7	1926	Duwayr Baʿabdah, a village in the Jablah District	Muslim ʿAlawī
Muḥammad ʿUmrān	Feb. 1964–Apr. 1965	1	1922	al-Mukharram al-Fuqānī, a village in the province of Ḥimṣ	Muslim ʿAlawī
ʿAbd-ul-Karīm aj-Jundī	Feb. 1964–Apr. 1965 Aug. 1965–Dec. 1965 Mar. 1966–Mar. 1969	5	1932	Salamiyyah	Muslim Ismaʿīlī converted to Sunnism
Fahmī al-ʿAshūrī	Feb. 1964–Apr. 1965	1	1933[a]	Maʿarat Miṣrīn (Idlib district)	Muslim Sunnī
Sulaymān al-ʿAlī	Feb. 1964–Apr. 1965	1	?	A village in the Ḥimṣ region	Muslim ʿAlawī
Muḥammad az-Zuʿbī	Feb. 1964–Dec. 1965 Mar. 1966–Sept. 1966	4	?	Aṭ-Ṭaybeh (Ḥawrān)	Muslim Sunnī

(Continued)

Occupation	*Education*	*Class Origin*
mander-in-chief Armed Forces 1963–1966; premier Nov. 1963–May 1964 and Oct. 1964–Sept. 1965; in exile since 1966		
Director, Officers' Affairs at the General Staff, 1963; chief of staff 1963–1965; member, Presidency Council 1964–1966; in prison from 1970 until his death in August 1993	Ḥimṣ Military Academy	Middling landed class; son of a subchief (*muqaddam*) of the ʿAlawī tribe of al-Ḥaddādīn; son-in-law of a district governor
Commander, 5th Armored Brigade at Ḥimṣ, March-June 1963; commander 70th Armored Brigade at al-Kiswah near Damascus, June-November 1963; deputy premier, 1963–1964; member Presidency Council, 1964; minister of defense, 1966; arrested Feb. 1966; assassinated, March 1972	Ḥimṣ Military Academy	Religious petty landowning class; son of a landed local notable and religious shaykh from the ʿAlawī tribe of al-Khayyāṭīn
Schoolteacher, Tell Dharrah village, late 1940s; commander, Rocket Forces at al-Quṭaifah, 1963–1964; minister of agrarian reform 1964–1965 and 1966; head of command, National Security Bureau, 1966–1969; committed suicide March 1969	Ḥimṣ Military Academy	Middle landed class; son of a landed local notable; a cousin of Samī aj-Jundī
Schoolteacher; governor of Latakia; minister of labor and social affairs and of municipal and rural affairs, 1964; minister of interior, Jan.–Feb. 1966	School of Law, Damascus University	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
Commander of the 22nd Commando Battalion, 1963; minister of labor and social affairs 1964; now owner of a transportation firm	Ḥimṣ Military Academy	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
Schoolteacher; minister of information, 1967; now professor at University of Ṣanʿā'	Ph. D. degree in political science, East Germany	Middle landed peasantry; son of a middle peasant from a locally influential clan of the Ḥawrān; brother-in-law of Farūq ash-Sharʿ, minister for foreign affairs

(Continued)

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*Number of Terms Elected*	*Year of Birth*	*Place of Birth*	*Religion and Sect*
Sāmī aj-Jundī	Feb. 1964– Apr. 1965	1	1921	Salamiyyah	Muslim Ismʿīlī converted to Sunnism
Jamīl Shiyyā	Feb. 1964– Dec. 1965 Mar. 1966– Sept. 1966	4	1931	ʿAley (Lebanon)	Druze
Yūsuf Zʿayyin	Feb. 1964– Dec. 1965 Mar. 1966– Nov. 1970	7	1931	Albū Kemāl	Muslim Sunnī
Maḥmūd aj-Jayyūsh	Feb. 1964– Apr. 1965	1	1993	Maʿārbah, a village in Ḥawran	Muslim Sunnī
al-Walīd Ṭāleb	Feb. 1964– Aug. 1965	2	1929[a]	Kfar Takhārīm (Idlib district)	Muslim Sunnī
Ḥabīb Ḥaddād	Apr. 1965– Aug. 1965 Mar. 1966– Nov. 1970	5	1932[a]	Al-Baṣīr, a village in Ḥawrān	Christian (Greek Orthodox)
Muṣṭafa Rustum	Apr. 1965– Dec. 1965 Mar. 1966– Oct. 1968 Mar. 1969– Nov. 1970	5	1936	A village east of Salamiyyah	Muslim Ismāʿīlī
ʿAdnān Shūmān	Apr. 1965– Aug. 1965	1	?	Latakia	Muslim Sunnī
Muṣṭafa Ṭlās	Aug. 1965– Dec. 1965 Oct. 1968 to the present	8	1932	Rastan, near Ḥimṣ	Muslim Sunnī

(Continued)

Occupation	*Education*	*Class Origin*
Dentist; minister of guidance, 1963–1964; ambassador to Paris, middle 1960s; in prison in 1969	School of dentistry, Damascus; advanced training in France	Middle landed class; son of a landed local notable and religious shaykh, a cousin of ʿAbd-ul-Karīm aj-Jundī
Schoolteacher (in Suwaydā'); minister of supply 1964–1965; ambassador to Moscow; deputy prime minister for economic affairs 1976–1980	B.S. degree, sciences	Middling mercantile class; son of a merchant; has extensive agricultural interests near Suwaydā'
Physician; minister of agrarian reform 1963; premier, Sept.–Dec. 1965 and 1966–1968	Medical School, Damascus; advanced training in London	Petty trading and landed class; son of an owner of sheep and a small plot of land
Official, Ministry of Labor; minister of supply, 1963–1964	School of Law, Damascus	Landed peasantry; son of a landed peasant
Schoolteacher; minister of municipal and rural affairs 1963; minister for presidential affairs 1964–1965	Licentiate Arabic language, Damascus University	Middle landed peasantry; son of a landed peasant
Heart surgeon; minister of information	Medical School, Damascus; training in heart surgery in Algeria	Landed peasantry; son of a peasant
Secondary school teacher; director of the "School for Military Preparation" (al-Iʿdād al-Ḥarbī) 1968–1970; in prison since 1971?	Secondary school, Salamiyyah; training in philosophy, Damascus University	Landed peasantry; son of a peasant
College teacher, cooperatives; UNESCO expert; director, cooperatives, Ministry of Labor; deputy minister of labor 1966	Doctorate, cooperatives	From a humble branch of a landed family of upper-middle status; brother of a navy commander
Teacher, physical education 1950–52; commander, 5th Armored Brigade at Ḥimṣ 1965–1968; chief of staff 1968–1972; deputy minister of defense 1968–1972; minister of defense since 1972; deputy prime minister since 1984	Ḥimṣ Military Academy; doctorate (?) from Supreme Institute for Military Studies, Voroshilov Academy, Moscow	Petty landed class; son of a mukhtār of Rastan; married into the upper landowning Aleppan family of Jābirī

(Continued)

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*Number of Terms Elected*	*Year of Birth*	*Place of Birth*	*Religion and Sect*
Salīm Ḥāṭūm	Aug. 1965–Dec. 1965	1	1937	Dhibīn (Salkhad district, Druze Mountain)	Druze
Muḥammad ʿĪd ʿAshāwī	Aug. 1965–Dec. 1965 Mar. 1966–Mar. 1969	4	1930	Dayr a-Zūr	Muslim Sunnī
Marwān Ḥabash	Aug. 1965–Dec. 1965 Mar. 1966–Nov. 1970	5	1938	Jubātā az-Zayt (Golan)	Muslim Sunnī
Fāyiz aj-Jāsem	Aug. 1965–Dec. 1965 Mar. 1966–Oct. 1968	3	1929	Dayr az-Zūr	Muslim Sunnī
Ḥisām Ḥayzah	Aug. 1965–Dec. 1965	1	?	Dayr az-Zūr	Muslim Sunnī
Aḥmad Suwaydānī	Mar. 1966–Feb. 1968	2	1932	Nawa (Ḥawran)	Muslim Sunnī
Kāmel Ḥusayn	Mar. 1966–Sept. 1966	1	1927	Ṣāfṣāf, a village in Latakia province	Muslim ʿAlawī
Ibrahīm Mākhūs	Mar. 1966–Nov. 1970	4	1928	Makhūs, a village in Latakia province	Muslim ʿAlawī
ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd Al Miqdād	Sept. 1966–Nov. 1970	3	1935	Ghaṣm, a village in the Ḥawrān	Muslim Sunnī
Ḥadīthah Murād	Sept. 1966–Nov. 1970	3	1937	al-Qurayyah (Druze Mountain)	Druze

(Continued)

Occupation	*Education*	*Class Origin*
Chief of a key commando unit in the 1963 and 1966 coups; executed June 25, 1967 for an alleged coup attempt	Ḥimṣ Military Academy	Middling landowing class; son of a director of census
Lawyer; governor of Darʿā and Ḥamāh; minister of interior, Sept.–Dec. 1965 and Mar. 1966–1968; minister of foreign affairs 1968–1969; in prison since 1970?	School of Law, Damascus	Landed peasant class; son of a landed peasant from the Khūrshān clan
Minister of industry 1969–1970; in prison since 1971?	College of Arts, Damascus University	Landed peasant class; son of a well-to-do landed peasant
Secondary school teacher; governor of al-Ḥasakah province 1964–1965; minister of agriculture and agrarian reform 1967–1970	Damascus University	Middle landed class; son of a middle landowner from the clan of Albū Ḥatāt
Lawyer	School of Law, Damascus University	Mercantile landed class; son of a customs official and merchant from the Shuyūkh clan
Chief of Military Intelligence 1963–1965; head, Military Personnel Bureau, 1965–1966; chief of staff 1966–1968; president Peasants' Union 1968–1969	Ḥimṣ Military Academy	Middle peasant class; son of a middle peasant and local notable
Schoolteacher; in prison since 1970?	Licentiate, Arabic literature, Damascus University	From a family of petty landed peasants and men of religion; son of a peasant
Physician; minister of health 1963–1964; minister for foreign affairs Sept.–Dec. 1965 and 1966–1968; secretary of the Command's Peasant Bureau, 1968–1969	Medical school, Damascus	Middling landed religious class; son of a landed religious shaykh
Secretary of the Command's Workers' Bureau; chief, port of Latakia; governor of as-Suwaydā' province; in prison since 1971?	School of Law, Damascus University	Middling landed peasantry; son of a peasant from a well-connected clan of the Ḥawrān
Schoolteacher; deputy commander, Nationalist Guard, and minister for the affairs of frontline villages 1968–1970; in prison since 1971?	College of Arts, Damascus University	Middling landed class; son of a middling landowner

(Continued)

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*Number of Terms Elected*	*Year of Birth*	*Place of Birth*	*Religion and Sect*
Muḥammad Saʿīd Ṭāleb	Sept. 1966–Nov. 1970	3	1938	A village in Qunaytrah province	Muslim Sunnī
ʿĀdel Nʿaysah	Oct. 1968–Mar. 1969	1	1938	Bisnādah, a village in Latakia province	Muslim ʿAlawī
Ḥamūd al-Qabbānī	Oct. 1968–Nov. 1970	2	?	Ash-Shahbāʾ (Druze Mountain)	Druze
Aḥmad Shaykh Qāsim	Mar. 1969–Nov. 1970	1	?	Of Palestinian origin	Muslim Sunnī
Anīs Kanjū	Mar. 1969–Nov. 1970	1	1936[a]	A village in al-Ḥaffah district, Latakia province	Muslim ʿAlawī
ʿAbd-ul-Ghanī Ibrahīm	Nov. 1970–Jan. 1980	3	1922	ʿAyn at-Tīnah, a village in al-Ḥaffah district, Latakia province	Musim ʿAlawī
Nājī Jamīl	Nov. 1970–Mar. 1978	2	1930	Dayr az-Zūr	Muslim Sunnī
ʿAbdur-Raḥmān al-Khlayfāwī	Nov. 1970–Jan. 1980	3	1927	Damascus, originally from Algeria	Muslim Sunnī
ʿAbd-ul-Ḥalīm Khaddām	Nov. 1970 to the present	5	1932	Bānyās	Muslim Sunnī

(Continued)

Occupation	*Education*	*Class Origin*
Teacher; minister of agrarian reform; in prison since 1971?	College of Sciences, Damascus University	Petty peasantry; son of a small landed peasant
Schoolteacher; governor of ar-Raqqah province 1968–1969; in prison since 1971?	Licentiate, Arabic literature, Damascus University	Petty peasantry; son of a secondary school teacher of peasant origin
Schoolteacher; minister of state for planning affairs 1968; minister of information 1969–1970	Licentiate, Arabic literature	Middling landed class; son of a middling landowner
Lawyer; secretary, ar-Raqqah party branch	School of Law, Damascus University	?
Professor of mathematics, Damascus University	Ph.D. in humanities, Eastern Europe	Rural religious status group; son of a religious shaykh
Commander, Frontline Forces 1965; chief of First Branch (Officers' Affairs) at the General Staff 1970; director, military academy; assistant minister of defense; director, political affairs in army; head of command's Syndicates Bureau	Ḥimṣ Military Academy	Middle landed peasantry; son of a landed peasant; now a millionaire; very close to Ḥafīz al-Asad
Deputy commander of Air Force 1970; commander of Air Force 1971–1978; deputy minister of defense for air force affairs 1975–1978; responsible for national security in Regional Command 1970–1978	Ḥimṣ Military Academy; air force training for three years in the U.K.	Petty official class; son of a policeman from the clan of ash-Shawālghah (allies of the Khurshān clan)
Schoolteacher; chief, First Branch Officers' Affairs at the General Staff 1968–1970; minister of interior 1970–1971; premier 1971–1972 and 1976–1978	Ḥimṣ Military Academy; military training in France	Upper middle religious mercantile class; son of an ʿālim and merchant
Lawyer; legal counsel for Iraq Petroleum Co., Bānyās; governor of Ḥamāh 1964, Qunaytrah 1964–1965, Damascus province 1965–1969; attorney general 1968–1969; minister of economy 1969–1970; deputy prime minister and minister for foreign affairs 1979–1984; vice president for foreign affairs since 1984	School of Law, Damascus University	Petty landed class; son of a small landowner and notable of Bānyās from a family that has traditionally fulfilled the function of *Khaddām* (servant) of local mosque

(Continued)

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*Number of Terms Elected*	*Year of Birth*	*Place of Birth*	*Religion and Sect*
ʿAbdallah al-Aḥmar, assistant secretary general since 1970	Nov. 1970 to the present	5	1936	at-Tall (Damascus province)	Muslim Sunnī
Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Ḥalabī	Nov. 1970–Jan. 1980	3	1931	Damascus (Bāb aj-Jābiyah quarter)	Muslim Sunnī
Maḥmūd al-Ayyūbī	Nov. 1970–Apr. 1975 Jan. 1980–Jan. 1985	3	1932	Damascus (Kurdish quarter)	Muslim Sunnī (Kurdish father and Arab mother)
Muḥammad Ḥaydar	Nov. 1970–Aug. 1976	3	1931	Qādī ʿYūn, a village in the ʿAlawī mountains	Muslim ʿAlawī
Aḥmad al-Khaṭīb	Nov. 1970–Apr. 1975	2	1930	Damascus	Muslim Sunnī
Muḥammad Ṭāleb Hilāl	Nov. 1970–May 1971	1	1930	Darʿa (Ḥawrān)	Muslim Sunnī
Dāūd ar-Raddāwī	Nov. 1970–May 1971	1	?	Dayr az-Zūr	Muslim Sunnī
Fahmī al-Yūxufī	Nov. 1970–Jan. 1980	3	1932	Maʿarat an-Nuʿmān	Muslim Sunnī

(Continued)

Occupation	*Education*	*Class Origin*
Secondary school teacher; secretary, Damascus suburbs branch 1966–1967; ex-governor of Ḥamāh and Idlib	Syrian University, degree in law	Artisan class; son of a stonemason
Teacher of physical education, Kuwait 1955–1960; accountant at Bata (Shoes) Co.; mayor of Damascus; president, People's Assembly; prime minister 1978–1980; member, Central Committee 1980–1985	Religious training	Petty official and trading lower middle class; son of a government official
Schoolteacher, Qatar; secretary general, Ministry of Education 1963–1969; minister of education, 1969–1971; prime minister 1972–1976	Degree in education, Damascus University	Petty official lower middle class; son of a policeman
Elementary school teacher; governor of Latakia 1970–1972; minister of agriculture and agrarian reform 1972–1973; deputy premier for economic affairs 1974–1976; chief, party's Economic Bureau; chief, party schools 1977; head of command's foreign relations school 1980–1985	B.A. in Letters, Damascus University	Petty religious landed class; son of a landed religious shaykh of note.
Schoolteacher; head of Teachers' Union; head of state Nov. 1970–Feb. 1971; speaker of People's Assembly 1971	Licenciate in Arts, Damascus University	Petty landed class; son of a bus ticket collector and owner of a farm in Suwaydā'
Schoolteacher; governor; deputy prime minister and minister of agriculture and agrarian reform 1970–1971; minister of industry 1971–1972	Philosophy, Faculty of Letters, Damascus University	Middling landed class; son of a landowner from the Mikdād clan of Buṣra
Physician; minister of health 1970–1971; minister of state 1971–1972	Medical School, Damascus University	Middling landed commercial class; son of a merchant from the Khurshān clan
Lawyer; director, Aleppo Spinning and Weaving Co.; member of Aleppo Baʿth branch command; president, People's Assembly; deputy premier for services 1978–1980	School of Law, Damascus University	Upper middle class; son of a landowner

(Continued)

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*Number of Terms Elected*	*Year of Birth*	*Place of Birth*	*Religion and Sect*
ʿAbdul-Karīm ʿAdī	Nov. 1970–Apr. 1975	2	1936	Ḥamāh	Muslim Sunnī
Muḥammad Jābir Bajbūj	May 1971–Jan. 1980	2	1934	Darʿā (Ḥawrān)	Muslim Sunnī
Jabr al-Kafrī	May 1971–Apr. 1975	1	1944[a]	Ḥawrān	Muslim Sunnī
ʿAbdallah al-Aḥmad	May 1971–Jan. 1980	2	1940	Ḥimṣ	Muslim ʿAlawī
Mutʿib Shnān	May 1971–Jan. 1980	2	1942	Ṣalkhad (Druze Mountain)	Druze
George Ṣaddiqnī	May 1971–Jan. 1980	2	1934[a]	Ṣafītah	Christian (Greek Orthodox)
Adīb Milḥim	May 1971–Apr. 1975	1	1939	Dayr az-Zūr	Muslim Sunnī
ʿIṣām an-Nāʾib	May 1971–Apr. 1975	1	1933	A village in the Arīḥa region, Idlib	Muslim Sunnī
Ṭāha al-Khayrāt	May 1971–Jan. 1980	2	1936	Ḥimṣ	Muslim Sunnī

(Continued)

Occupation	*Education*	*Class Origin*
Teacher; minister in various capacities since 1971; minister of state for presidency affairs 1980–1984; minister of local administration 1984–1985	Degree in law, Damascus University	From a poor branch of an influential commercial family; son of a small trader
Teacher, physical education; head, command's Organization and Training Bureau 1971–1975; assistant regional secretary 1975–1980; member, Central Committee 1980–1985	Physical education, Damascus University	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
Teacher; ex-ambassador to Moscow; governor of Ḥimṣ; minister of petroleum and electricity, 1973–1974	Degree in law, Damascus University	Petty landed peasant class; son of a landed peasant
Oil refinery worker; chief, trade union, Ḥimṣ	Baʿth party training school; political training, Damascus University; trade and political economy, Moscow	Poor landless peasantry; son of a poor peasant
Schoolteacher; minister of social affairs and labor 1970–1971; minister of defense 1971–1972; minister of industry 1972; head of command's Youth and Sports Bureau 1975–1980; member, Central Committee 1980–1985	Arabic literature, Damascus University	Petty landed class; son of a small landowner
Long-time teacher; minister of information 1973–1974; head of command's Education and then Cultural Bureau; member, Central Committee 1980–1985	Arabic literature, Damascus University	Petty official class; son of a rural policeman
Secondary school teacher; member of a teaching mission to Algeria; minister of state for presidential affairs 1978–1980	B. A. in philosophy, Damascus University	Artisan class; son of a carpenter
Judicial officer; ambassador to Tunisia; assistant and then deputy minister for foreign affairs	Degree in law	Middle landed peasantry; son of a peasant
Schoolteacher; chief, Baʿth party branch, Darʿā; chief of command's Peasant Bureau 1971–75; minister of local administration 1978–1980	Degree in law, Damascus University	Peasant class; son of a peasant

(Continued)

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*Number of Terms Elected*	*Year of Birth*	*Place of Birth*	*Religion and Sect*
Zuhayr Mashārqah	Apr. 1975 to the present	3	1938	Aleppo (Mashārqah quarter)	Muslim Sunnī
Rifʿat al-Asad	Apr. 1975–Feb. 1998	3	1937	al-Qirdāḥah, a village in the ʿAlawī mountains	Muslim ʿAlawī
Aḥmad Diyāb	Apr. 1975–Jan. 1985	2	1939	ʿAyn Ḥūr (Zabadānī region)	Muslim Sunnī
Maḥmūd Ḥadīd	Apr. 1975–Jan. 1980	1	1935	Nabk	Muslim Sunnī
Yūsuf al-Asʿad	Apr. 1975–Jan. 1980	1	1937	Ḥimṣ	Muslin ʿAlawī
Aḥmad al-Ḥasan	Apr. 1975–Jan. 1980	1	1938	Ḥusayn al-Baḥr, a village near Ṭarṭūs	Muslim ʿAlawī

(Continued)

Occupation	*Education*	*Class Origin*
Lawyer; director of public sector textile co., Aleppo 1969–1971; principal of private school, Aleppo 1971–1973; governor of Aleppo 1973 and of Ḥamāh 1973–1975; minister of education 1978–1980; assistant regional secretary 1980–1985; vice president for educational and cultural affairs since 1984	School of Law, Aleppo University; advanced degree in administrative law	Artisan class; son of an artisan
Customs official; joined army 1966; commander of Damascus area commandos and paratroopers 1966–1970; commander of Sarāyā-d-Difāʿ (defense units) 1971–1984; chief of command's Education Office 1979–1980; nominally vice president for security affairs from 1984 to February 1998 but actually excluded from any active role	Doctorate in political science and economy, Moscow University 1974; Syria's Army Staff College	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant and leader of al-ʿĀylah quarter of Qirdāḥah from al-Kalbiyyah tribe
Schoolteacher; director general, Ministry of Education 1975; head of command's Students' Bureau 1975; chairman, Committee to Investigate Corruption, August 1977; chief of command's National Security Bureau 1979–1984; member, Central Committee since 1985	College of Arts, University of Damascus	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
Fabric mills weaver; head, Spinning and Weaving Union 1967; president, General Federation of Labor Unions 1972–1980; president, People's Assembly; chief of command's Laborers' Bureau 1975–1980; member, Central Committee since 1980	Elementary education	Laboring class; son of a laborer
Engineer; responsible for Ghāb reclamation project; head of Ḥamāh party branch 1971–1975; head of command's Organization Bureau 1975–1979; head of command's Peasants' Bureau 1979–1980; member, Central Committee 1980–1985	Engineering School, Damascus University	Well-to-do contracting class; son of a local notable
Engineer; minister of petroleum, electricity, and industrial projects 1967–1970; chief of party's Tarṭūs branch; chief of command's Youth Bureau 1975	Engineering School, Damascus University	Petty religious landed class; son of a local notable

(Continued)

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*Number of Terms Elected*	*Year of Birth*	*Place of Birth*	*Religion and Sect*
Nabīh Ḥassūn	Apr. 1975–Jan. 1980	1	1939	A village in the Idlib region	Muslim Sunnī
Aḥmad Iskandar Aḥmad	Jan. 1980–Dec. 1983	1	1944	ʿĀshiq al-ʿUmar, a village in Ḥimṣ province	Muslim ʿAlawī
Ḥikmat al-Shihābī	Jan. 1980–July 1998	2	1931	al-Bāb northeast of Aleppo	Muslim Sunnī
Nāṣir-ud-Dīn Nāṣir	Jan. 1980–Jan. 1985	1	1935	Aleppo	Muslim Sunnī
ʿAbd-ur-Raʾūf al-Kasm	Jan. 1980 to the present	2	1932	Damascus	Muslim Sunnī
Walīd Ḥamdūn	Jan. 1980 to the present	2	1936	Ḥamāh	Muslim Sunnī
Tawfīq Ṣālḥah	Jan. 1980 to the present	2	?	aj-Junaynah, a village near Shahbāʾ in the Druze Mountain	Druze

(Continued)

Occupation	*Education*	*Class Origin*
Lawyer; member of command of Idlib party branch	Degree in law from Damascus University	Peasantry; son of a peasant
Journalist; chief editor of *ath-Thawrah* and of Syrian News Agency (SANA); minister of information 1974–1983; died 1983	Cairo University 1965; degree in English literature, Damascus University	Petty landed trading class; son of a petty landed shopkeeper
Chief of military intelligence 1970–1974; chief of staff 1974–1998	Ḥimṣ Military Academy; additional military studies and air force training in U.S.A. and USSR	Middle landed commercial class; son of a middle landowner from a locally influential family
Branch secretary, Baʿth party Armed Forces Committee; chief of political administration, Ministry of Defense; minister of interior 1980–1985; member, Central Committee since 1980	Ḥimṣ Military Academy	Upper middle commercial class; cousin of deputy president of Chamber of Commerce of Aleppo
Professor, Academy of Fine Arts, Damascus 1963–1964; dean, Faculty of Arts, 1964–1970; head, Department of Architecture 1970–1977, and deputy president, Damascus University 1977–1979; governor of Damascus City 1979–1980; premier 1980–1987; head, National Security Bureau of the Baʿth command since 1987	Doctorate in architecture and city planning, University of Geneva, 1963; degree in civil engineering from Istanbul	Upper middle religious commercial class; son of a religious shaykh
Chief of staff, 3rd Division and Artillery commander prior to 1978; governor of Damascus province 1978–1980; deputy premier for services 1980–1985; head of command's vocational Syndicates' Bureau 1980–1985	Ḥimṣ Military Academy	Artisan class; son of an artisan
Lawyer; head of Organization Bureau of Damascus branch command 1971–1974; governor of Idlib 1975–1980; head of command's Organization and Legal Affairs Bureau 1980–1985; head of Professional Unions' Bureau, 1985	Degree in law, Damascus University	Petty landed peasantry; son of a small landed peasant

(Continued)

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*Number of Terms Elected*	*Year of Birth*	*Place of Birth*	*Religion and Sect*
ʿIzz-ud-Dīn Nāṣir	Jan. 1980 to the present	2	1938	Bānyās	Muslim ʿAlawī
Maḥmūd az-Zuʿbī	Jan. 1980 to the present	2	1938	Khirbet al-Ghazālah (Ḥawrān)	Muslim Sunnī
Saʿīd Ḥamādī	Jan. 1980 to the present	2	?	al-Mayādīn, on the Euphrates	Muslim Sunnī
Wahīb Ṭannūs	Jan. 1980 to the present	2	1945[a]	Libṭār, a village in the Ṭarṭūs district	Christian (Greek Orthodox)
ʿAbd-ul-Qādir Qaddūrah	Jan. 1980 to the present	2	1935	Damascus (of Libyan origin)	Muslim Sunnī
Ilyās al-Lāṭī	Jan. 1980–Jan. 1985	1	?	Ḥabb Nimrah, a village in the Valley of the Christians	Christian (Greek Orthodox)

(Continued)

Occupation	*Education*	*Class Origin*
Oil worker; chief of the General Federation of Trade Unions since 1975; head of command's Worker's Bureau since 1980	Elementary	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
Agronomist; head of Agricultural Center for Ghāb 1964–1968; head of Agricultural Office, Idlib 1968–1970 and Ḥamāh 1970–1971; secretary, command's Peasants' Bureau 1972–1973; director general of Organization for Development of Euphrates 1973–1976; head of command's Finance and Economy Bureau 1976–1980; head of command's Peasant's Bureau 1980–1981; speaker, People's Assembly 1981–1987; prime minister since June 1987	Agronomy, Cairo	Middle landed peasantry; son of a middle peasant and mukhtār from a locally influential clan of the Ḥawrān
Schoolteacher; head of Education Bureau of Damascus branch command 1971–1974; head of command's Education and Youth Bureau 1980–1985; head of Revolutionary Youth Union and of command's Sport and Youth Bureau since 1985	Degree in law, Damascus University	Petty official class; son of a policeman
College professor; deputy dean, Faculty of Arts, Aleppo University; head of command's Higher Education Bureau	Doctorate in medicine, Soviet Union	Middle landed peasantry; son of a peasant
Schoolteacher; head of several public sector companies, including chemical and pharmaceutical industries prior to 1980; deputy prime minister for economic affairs 1980–1985; head of command's Economic Bureau; president of the People's Assembly since June 1987	Doctorate; studied chemistry in Damascus, German Democratic Republic, and the U.K.	Middle official class; son of a police officer
Teacher of sociology; head of High Education Bureau at Ḥimṣ branch command 1975–1980; chief of command's Students Bureau 1980–1985	B.A. degree in sociology, Damascus University	Middle landed peasantry; son of a peasant

(Continued)

Name	*Duration of Membership*	*Number of Terms Elected*	*Year of Birth*	*Place of Birth*	*Religion and Sect*
Sulaymān Qaddāḥ Assistant Secretary General since 1985	Jan. 1980 to the present	2	1943[a]	Kḥayl, a village in the Ḥawrān	Muslim Sunnī
Aḥmad Qabalān	Jan. 1985 to the present	1	1938	Bayt aj-Jinn (under Mt. Hermon)	Muslim Sunnī
ʿAbd-ur-Razzāq Ayyūb	Jan. 1985 to the present	1	1939	ar-Rastan	Muslim Sunnī
Aḥmad Ḍirghām	Jan. 1985 to the present	1	1942	Al-Qabū, a village in the district of Jableh	Muslim ʿAlawī
Fāyiz an-Nāṣir	Jan 1985 to the present	1	1932	al-Baṣīr (Ḥawrān)	Christian (Greek Orthodox)
Rashīd Ikhtirīnī	Jan. 1985 to the present	1	1944[a]	Ikhtirīn (a village in the Aleppo region)	Muslim Sunnī

[a]Approximate date.

[b]The dammānīn purchased, for a fixed sum, the fruit crop while on the trees and organized at their expense gathering, packing, and transport operations.

(Continued)

Occupation	*Education*	*Class Origin*
Professor of commerce, Damascus University; head, chemical and pharmaceutical industry; director general, Arab Medical Co.; head, Higher Education Bureau, Damascus branch command 1975–1980; head of command's Economic-Financial Bureau 1980–1985; head of Peasants' Bureau 1981–1985	Doctorate in economics from Eastern Europe	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
Agronomist; chief, Chamber of Agriculture, Damascus; minister of frontline villages 1970–1971; minister of state for large villages 1971–1972; minister of supply 1972–1976; minister of agriculture 1976–1980; member, Central Committee since 1980; Damascus Province branch secretary 1980–1985; head of command Peasants' Bureau since 1985	Studied agronomy in Damascus, Cairo, and Hungary	Middle landed peasantry; son of a peasant and mukhtār
Schoolteacher and poet; member of People's Assembly; head of chemical fertilizer plant, Ḥimṣ; secretary of Ḥimṣ party branch 1980–1985; head of command's Education Bureau since 1985	B.A. in Arabic literature, Damascus University	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
Professor of politics; dean, Faculty of Arts, Damascus University; head of command's Ideology and Indoctrination Bureau since 1985	Ph.D. from Moscow University	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
Secondary school teacher; director, Institute of Industrial Technology, Damascus (in the 1960s); president, Teachers' Union 1970–1971; minister of information 1971–1972; minister of oil, electricity, and mineral resources 1972; president, Teachers' Union 1976; head of command's Organization Bureau since 1985	Studied Arabic literature and physics, Damascus University	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant
Insurance employee; Central Committee since 1980; secretary, Aleppo party branch 1980–1985; head of command's Popular Organizations Bureau since 1985; deputy prime minister for services since 1996	Degree in law, Aleppo University	Petty landed peasantry; son of a peasant

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N O T E S

Chapter 1
The Role of Demographics

1. This figure does not include the population of the district of Alexandretta, which was estimated at 212,000.

2. World Bank, *World Development Report, 1993*, p. 288.

3. Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life*, 1:31.

4. Thus as late as the years 1976–1979—and Syria's Central Bureau of Statistics has not published figures for subsequent years—the mortality rate per thousand for male infants aged 0–1 was 69.34 in rural areas and 45.92 in urban areas, and for female infants 65.49 and 31.46, respectively; Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1994*, p. 60. For people aged fifty and above, consult Table 8/2 on the same page, ibid.

5. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar al-ʿĀm as-Sābiʿ*, pp. 19–20.

6. Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1991*, p. 90.

7. Ibid., *1994*, p. 80.

8. Consult Table 14–1 relating to annual precipitation, ibid., p. 47.

9. Based on figures in Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census in Syrian Arab Republic, 1970*, vol. I, pp. 1 and 39, in *Results of the Population Census . . . , 1981*, pp. 44 and 225, and in *Statistical Abstract, 1994*, p. 74.

10. Based on figures in Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1996*, p. 59

Chapter 2
Differentiations

1. See Chapter 6.

2. Consult Chapter 10.

3. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah (who traveled in al-Ghūṭah, in 1326), *Tuḥfat-un-Nuzzār*, edited by Defremery and Sanguinetti under the title *Voyages d'Ibn Baṭouṭah*, p. 236. See also Kurd ʿAlī (1876–1953), *Khiṭaṭ-ush-shām*, 6:299.

4. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria*, p. 221.

5. For this point see Bianquis, "Reforme foncière et politique agricole dans la Ghuta de Damas," p. 111.

6. Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census, 1970*, *7*:225.

7. Idem, *Statistical Abstract, 1994*, p. 30.

8. The wide diffusion of mazārs in mountainous or hilly areas was noted by many past students of Syria. Consult Lyde, *The Ansyreeh and Ismaeleeh*, p. 287; Schumacher, *The Jaulan*, pp. 23–24; Bell, *Syria*, pp. 95–96 and 213; and Weulersse, *Le pays des Alouites*, 1:255–56.

9. My attention was directed to this tendency by Professor Yūsuf Ibish and Ḥasan Sāmī bin ʿAbd-ur-Raḥmān al Yūsuf, who descend from a prominent landed family that owned villages in al-Marj, al-Ghūṭah, the Jawlān, and al-Baṭīḥah (the name of the eastern shore of Lake Tiberias).

10. This was true even though the Agrarian Reform Law forbad the alienation of land by beneficiaries before the elapse of twenty years.

11. For this appellation, see Ḥamīdeh, *La region d'Alep*, p. 171.

12. Quoted by Lyde, *The Ansyreeh and Ismaeleeh*, p. 22.

13. Weulersse, *Le pays des Alouites*, 1:372.

14. Ḥamīdeh, *La region d'Alep*, p. 153.

15. The village of al-Bīṭāriyyah.

16. The villages of Zaʿūrah, al-Ghajr, and ʿAyn Fīt; Schumacher, *The Jaulan*, pp. 59–60, 76–77, and 272–73.

17. *Les pays des Alouites*, 1:326.

18. Bell, *Syria*, pp. 66–67.

19. Abū Rāshid, *Jabal ad-Durūz*, pp. 119–21 and *Ḥawrān ad-Dāmiyyah*, p. 11; and Abū Ṣāleḥ and Makārem, *Tārīkh al-Muwaḥḥidīn ad-Durūz as-Siyāsī*, pp. 195–200.

20. Abū Rāshid, *Ḥawrān ad-Dāmiyyah*, p. 179.

21. Abū Rāshid, *Jabal ad-Durūz*, p. 121.

22. Notably, al-Fūʿah, Maʿarat Misrīn, and Kfaryā.

23. Among others, Nubbul and Naghāwlah.

24. Including Kiftīn, Maʿarat al-Ikhwān, and Kfar Binna.

25. In such villages as Khabab, Tubnah, and Baṣīr.

26. In Ṣadad, al-Ḥafar, Zaydal, Maskanah, and Fayrūzah, among others.

27. The percentages are based on figures given in Appendix B, Table 2, of Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon*, p. 386.

28. Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *at-Taʿdād al-ʿĀmm Li-s-Sukkān, 1960*, pp. 18–19.

29. Bell, *Syria*, p. 293.

30. See his article on the "Yazīdis" in the *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, edited by H.A.R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers (Ithaca, N.Y., 1953), p. 642.

31. "Memoire descriptif de la Frontière entre la Syrie et L'Irak" enclosed with a note dated 7 March 1932 from the Secretary General of the League of Nations to the British Foreign Office, FO 406/69/4694, E 1302/15/89, pp. 192–93.

32. Menzel, "Yazīdis."

33. Guys, *La Nation Druse*, p. 15.

34. In Arabic, *hādī-l-mustajībīn*. In Ismaʿīli doctrine *mustajībīn* referred to "the initiated."

35. A not altogether accurate French translation of al-ʿahd, ibid., pp. 145–46. An Arabic text, expressed in the third person singular, may be found in Abū Rāshid, *Jabal ad-Durūz*, pp. 84–85.

36. The Fāṭimid dynasty (909–1171) is so named after Fāṭimah, the daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad, the wife of ʿAlī, and the mother of al-Ḥusayn and al-Ḥasan.

37. Abū Rāshid, *Jabal ad-Durūz*, p. 82.

38. Abū Ṣāleḥ and Makārem, *Tarīkh al-Muwaḥḥidīn*, p. 63.

39. Abū Rāshid, *Jabal ad-Durūz*, p. 90.

40. ʿAlī, al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn, ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq, Mūsa al-Kāzim, ʿAlī ar-Riḍa, Muḥammad aj-Jawād, ʿAlī al-Hādī, al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, and Muḥammad al-Muntazar.

41. The book, which also appeared in Beirut in 1863, was entitled *Kitāb al-Bākūrah as-Sulaymāniyyah fī Kashfi Asrār ad-Diyānah an-Nuṣayriyyah*. An incomplete English translation by Edward E. Salisbury was published in the *Journal of American Oriental Society* 8 (New Haven, 1866), pp. 227–308.

42. For a French translation of *Kitab al-Majmūʿ*, see Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairis*.

43. al-Adhanī, *Kitāb al-Bākūrah*, pp. 2–6; and Salisbury, pp. 229–33.

44. The Ismāʿīlis, however, unlike the other three sects, reject the idea of the passage of the soul into the bodies of animals.

45. Hume, *The History of England*, 1:28.

46. al-Adhanī, *Kitāb al-Bākūrah*, pp. 3 and 18.

47. Ibid., p. 82.

48. Ibid., p. 15.

49. Consult Louis Massignon, articles on "Karmatians" and "Nuṣairi," *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, pp. 218 and 456; and aṭ-Ṭawīl, *Tārīkh-ul-ʿAlawiyyīn*, pp. 200–12.

50. In Arabic, *al-Khamsah al-Aytām*.

51. Miqdād bin Aswad al-Kindi.

52. Abū-dh-Dharr al-Ghifārī.

53. ʿAbdallah bin Rawāḥah al-Anṣārī.

54. ʿUthmān bin Mazʿūn an-Najāshī.

55. Qanbar bin Kādān ad-Dawsī.

56. Here the professor of faith calls to witness the members of the first seven orders (other than the Veil, the Communicator, and the "Five Incomparables") and the last seven orders of *Ahl al-Marātib*, addressing them merely by their titles. In the case of the first series, the titles are in a descending order, the Naqīb (Marshal), Najīb (Highborn), Mukhtaṣṣ (Qualified), Mukhliṣ (Devoted), and Mumtaḥan (Tested). The last seven orders comprise the Muqarrab (Favorite), Karūbī (Cherub), Rūḥānī (Spiritual), Muqaddas (Sanctified), Sāyeḥ (Traveler), Mustamiʿ (Listener), and Lāḥiq (Dependent).

57. The name of ʿAlī is printed in this chapter disconnectedly with Ibn (rather than connectedly with bin), congruently perhaps with Nuṣayrī disavowal of the human origin of ʿAlī.

58. After Muḥammad bin Jundab, a successor of Ibn Nuṣayr.

59. After Muḥammad aj-Jannān aj-Junbulānī, another successor of Ibn Nuṣayr and a native of Junbula, Iraq.

60. See p. 18 above.

61. After Muḥammad bin ʿAlī aj-Jillī who was from Jilliyya near Antioch and a disciple of al-Khāṣībī.

62. After al-Maymūn bin Qāsim aṭ-Ṭabarānī (d. 1035), a disciple of aj-Jillī.

63. Dhū-l-Faqār is the name of a renowned sword of the Prophet and afterwards of ʿAlī, and was thus called apparently because it had small beautiful scallops in the edge; E. W.

Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexion* (London, 1877) Book 1, Part 5, p. 2,426.

64. Al-Adhanī, *Kitāb al-Bakūrah*, pp. 26–27, and Salisbury, pp. 255–56.

65. ʿUlamā and Men of Religion, *Al-ʿAlawiyyūn*, pp. 5–7, 16–20, and 27.

66. Ibid., p. 10.

67. Aj-Jundī, *al-Baʿth*, pp. 144–45.

68. In Arabic, *al-wahdah al-madhabiyyah*.

69. Preface by the Distinguished Ja ʿfarī (Shī ʿī) Mufti ʿAbd-ul-Amīr Qabalān to *al-ʿAlawiyyūn*, p.4.

70. Islamic ʿAlawī Congress, *Munāzarāt*, pp. 9–15.

71. This is not the real name of the participant but a pseudonym.

72. Islamic ʿAlawī Congress, *Munāzarāt*, p. 29.

73. This is also a pseudonym.

74. Ash-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-n-Niḥal*, 1:174.

75. Islamic ʿAlawī Congress, *Munāzarāt*, pp. 29–45.

76. Ibid., pp. 48–49.

77. Ibid., p. 50

78. Ibid., pp. 76–78.

79. as-Sayyid, Ḥizb-ul-Baʿth-il-ʿArabī, p. 136.

80. Aḥmad Waṣfī Zakariyyah (1889–1964), who was from 1943 to 1950 inspector general of the Ministry of Agriculture, *ʿAshāʾir-ush-Shām*, pp. 599–601.

81. The observations in the preceding five paragraphs are based on data in Sulaymān Najm Khalaf (a native of the village of Ḥāwī al-Hawā in the district of ar-Raqqah and a member of aḍ-Ḍāher subsection of the ʿAfādlah tribe), "Tribal Politics and Leadership in the Raqqa Region of Syria."

82. Presidential decree no. 1093 of 29 May 1973, Syrian Arab Republic, *Aj-Jarīdah ar-Rasmiyyah* Part I, No. 23 of 1973, p. 112.

83. *Al-Baʿth*, 7 March 1972, p. 5.

84. Presidential decree no. 1655 of 5 August 1977, *aj-Jarīdah ar-Rasmiyyah*, Part I, No. 32 of 1977, p. 4.

85. Clans = ḥamāʾil, plural of ḥamūla.

86. Conversation with Shaykh Aḥmad Mūsa as-Ṣamādī, May 1980.

87. Conversation with an inhabitant of Jimrīn, May 1980.

88. Āl Miqdād, al-Ḥamd, al-Khalīl, Banī Ḥamīd, Dōs, aṣ-Ṣalākhidah, and as-Suwaydān.

89. Each qurʿa equals also twenty feddāns, another unit of measure used at Buṣra. One hectare equals 2.471 acres.

90. The preceding observations relating to Buṣra and its surrounding villages are based on conversations in May 1980 with sixteen inhabitants of Buṣra from various walks of life, including Miqdādis and non-Miqdādis, Sunnis and Shīʿīs, laborers and chiefs, all of whom were very helpful, especially Sulaymān al-Miqdād, the local Director of Antiquities, and the eighty-year-old chief of al-Ḥamd clan, Maḥmūd al-Ḥamd.

91. Abū Rāshid, Ḥawrān ad-Dāmiyah, p. 58.

92. Saʿd-ud-Dīn Effendi Khalīl al-Miqdād. Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 424/220, letter of 31 August 1909, from Consul Devey, Damascus, to Sir G. Lowther, London.

93. Muṣṭafa al-Miqdād. Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 406/76/4694, E 1405/441/89, *Records of Leading Personalities in Syria and the Lebanon* (1938), p. 198.

94. ʿAbd-ul-Latīf al-Miqdād. al-ʿAzm, *Mudhakkirāt*, 3:307.

95. For sources, see note 90.

96. Conversation with a son of Shaykh Aḥmad Jamāl al-Ḥarīrī, May 1980.

97. Banī Ismaʿīl, Banī Najm, and Banī Ḥammūd.

98. A-Suwaydāʾ, Ṣalkhad, al-Qurayyah, Qayṣamā, ʿAnz, ʿIra, Rasās, ʿUrmān, Malaḥ, Ṣamād, Umm-ur-Rummān, ʿAws, al-ʿĀnāt, al-Hawiyyah, Dhībīn, and al-Ghariyyah.

99. Also known as al-ʿAwāmrah.

100. The groups of Bashīr, Khamrī, Asʿad, Fāris, Qabalān, and Dʿaybis.

101. Ash-Shahbā, Ghamrah, ʿAmrah, al-Mtūnah, as-Swaymrah, al-Bathīnah, al-Hīt, al-Hayāt, Taʿlā, Mardak, and Braykah.

102. Including aṣ-Ṣawarrah, ath-Thaʿlah, and al-Hīt.

103. The Banī Abū ʿAssāf lived and were dominant in the villages of Slaym, Walghā, and ʿAqīl.

104. The Banī Abū Rās dominated the village of ar-Raḥā.

105. The generalizations in the preceding three paragraphs are based on conversations in June 1985 with Druze peasants, including five from ash-Shahbā' and with two members of al-Aṭrash clan—Dr. Jabr al Aṭrash and Nash'at al-Aṭrash—as well as on data in Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 406/46/4694, E 4408/117/89, letter of 25 March 1921, from

Consul Palmer, Damascus, to Earl Curzon, London; FO 406/57/4694, E 973/12/89, letter of 31 January 1926, from Consul Smart, Damascus, to Sir Austen Chamberlain, London; and FO 371/52889, E 2571/2571/89, letter of 8 March 1946, from Shone, British Legation, Beirut, to Ernest Bevin, London; Abū Rāshid, *Jabal-ud-Durūz*, pp. 42–44, 103, and 178–206; Abū Ṣāleḥ and Makārem, *Tarīkh al-Muwaḥhidīn*, pp. 290–372; al-Qāsimī, *Wathā'iq Jadīdah*, pp. 162–67; and interviews of *Our World* and Dr. Jabr al-Aṭrash with Mansūr al-Aṭrash, *Our World* (organ of the World Druze Community, Knoxville, Tennessee), vol. 1, No. 1 (Fall 1984), pp. 6–14.

106. Conversation with Ḥamad ʿUbayd, 30 June 1985. For a biographical notice of ʿAlī ʿUbayd and his role in the 1925–1927 uprising, see Āl Jundī, *Tārīkh-uth-Thawrāt*, p. 244.

107. For the role of Shaykh Yūsuf Ḥamd al-ʿAysamī in the rising, see ibid., p. 243.

108. Conversation with ʿĀṭef and ʿĀdel Ḥātūm, May 1985.

109. For Sultān al-Aṭrash and his revolutionary activities, consult Āl Jundī, *Tārīkh-uth-Thawrāt*, pp. 233–34, and Shāhbandar, *Thawrat-u-Sūriyyah*, pp. 51–81.

110. Murād and al-Qabbānī are sons of middle landowners, and Ṣalḥah is a son of a small landed peasant.

111. Conversations with Dr. Jabr al-Aṭrash and Nash'at al-Aṭrash, June 1985.

112. Conversations with peasants from ash-Shahbā', June 1985.

113. Ar-Razzāz, *at-Tajribat-ul-Murrah*, p. 131.

114. For the effects of the agrarian reforms on the Ghūṭah, see Bianquis, "Reforme foncière," pp. 89ff.

115. Thus, in its *Statistical Abstract, 1994*, p. 109, the Central Bureau of Statistics repeated the 1975 figures. According to the Peasants' General Union, under the 1980 decree a total of 44,040 hectares were expropriated, but the union did not indicate whether or how these were redistributed; *al-Mu'tamar al-ʿĀm as-Sābiʿ*, p. 82.

116. Based on figures in *1970–71 Agricultural Census* . . . p.168.

117. Ibid., p. 158, and Table 2–1 in this chapter.

118. Syria, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform *1970–71 Agricultural Census. First Stage—Basic Data*, p. 158, and *Annual Agricultural Statistical Abstract, 1981*, pp. 326–27.

119. Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1994*, p. 144.

120. According to idem, *Statistical Abstract, 1971* (p. 130), at the end of 1970 the total number of "registered" agricultural tractors in Syria was 15,213 and of "registered" harvesters, threshers, and combines 2,084. When these figures are compared with those taken from the 1970–1971 agricultural census, which are cited in the text, they suggest that in that year at least 56.8 percent of the tractors and 64.2 percent of the harvesters and threshers were privately owned, assuming that the relevant statistics are not defective. It is also worth mentioning that in 1990 the peasant unions owned only 797 tractors out of a total of 61,628 or 1.3 percent, and merely 47 harvesters out of a total of 4,131; see the Peasants' General Union's, *al-Mu'tamar al-ʿĀm as-Sābiʿ*, pp. 238 and 240.

121. In the second half of the 1960s there were legal ceilings on the area of land that could be exploited by any one person. For example, twelve hectares of treeless irrigated land and six hectares of irrigated land covered with trees constituted the maximum permissible limit in the Ghūṭah region; Decision no. 999 of 19 December 1965 refers; Syria, *aj-Jarīdah ar-Rasmiyyah* No. 5 of 1966, p. 1,303.

Chapter 3
Living Conditions

1. "Bow" referred to the farming stock and "steel," reportedly, to the nature of the contract.

2. Smith, *Wealth of Nations* Book 3, chap. 2, pp. 366–68.

3. Bloch, *French Rural History*, pp. 147–48.

4. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East*, 1:144.

5. Ḥamīdeh, *La region d'Alep*, pp. 215–16.

6. Conversations with Ḥawrāni peasants from the Buṣra region and with the eighty-year-old chief of al-Ḥamd clan, Maḥmūd al-Ḥamd, May 1980.

7. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria*, p. 297.

8. Ibid.

9. Conversations with Dr. Jabr al-Aṭrash and

with Druze peasants from ash-Shahbā', June 1985. The mudd prevalent in southern Syria was the Damascene mudd, which equaled 20 kilograms. In the north the Roman mudd was used; this equaled 18 kilograms.

10. Abū Rāshid, Ḥawrān ad-Dāmiyyah, pp. 210, 212.

11. Bianquis, "Réforme foncière et politique agricole dans la Ghūṭa de Damas," p. 52.

12. Conversation with Ḥasan Sāmī al-Yūsuf, Damascus, June 3, 1980. Mr. Al-Yūsuf is from a well-known Damascene landed family.

13. Naaman, "Le pays de Homs (Syrie centrale)," pp. 98–99.

14. as-Sibā ʿī, *Aḍwā' ʿala-r-Ra'smāl al-ajnabī*, p. 231.

15. Sophia Farra, *ar-Raqqah wa Abʿāduhā-l-Ijtimāʿiyyah*, translated from the French by ʿAbd-ur-Raḥmān Ḥamīdah (Damascus, 1982), p. 140.

16. Bell, *Syria*, p. 206.

17. Rafīq Bey and Bahjat Bey, *Wilāyat Beirut*, cited in Ḥannā, *al-Qaḍiyyat-uz-Zirāʿiyyah*, Part 1, p. 141. Officially in 1911 one Turkish gold lira equaled 100 gold piastres; one Napoleon, 87-1/2 gold piastres; and one pound sterling, 110 gold piastres; Weakley, *Report upon the Conditions and Prospects of British Trade*, p. 21.

18. For the last-mentioned point, see al-Bītār, *Ḥilyat-ul-Bashar*, Part 3, pp. 1,600–1.

19. Yūnis, *Thawrat-ush-Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī*, p. 178.

20. Bell, *Syria*, pp. 94, 223–24.

21. Conversations with Wajīhah al-Yūsuf Ibish, Ḥasan Sāmī al-Yūsuf, and Professor Yūsuf Ibish, daughter, son, and grandson of ʿAbd-ur-Raḥmān al-Yūsuf, Beirut, February 1980, and Damascus, June 1980.

22. Or *kātib-ul-hisābāt*.

23. Literally, "the chief of (canal) clearers"

24. Conversations with the persons mentioned in note 21.

25. as-Sibāʿī, *Aḍwā' ʿala-r-Ra'smāl al-Ajnabī*, p. 243.

26. Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division, *Syria*, p. 285.

27. Based on figures in Asfour, *Syria*, pp. 45 and 47.

28. Naaman, *Le pays de Homs*, pp. 51–52. The *shumbul* is a variable measure for different crops.

29. Partly based on Warriner, *Land and Poverty*, p. 89.

30. Naaman, *Le pays de Homs*, pp. 53–54.

31. Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1950*, p. 98.

32. The official index number of retail prices for 22 essential commodities in Damascus was 561.6 in 1949 (1938 = 100) but had reached its record peak at 830.5 in 1945; ibid., *1951–1952*, p. 149. The value of the gold lira was higher in 1945, when it exchanged for 45 Syrian pounds; ibid., *1950*, p. 121.

33. Haylān, *ath-Thaqāfah wa-t-Tanmiyah*, p. 265.

34. Based on figures in Syria, Ministry of Planning, *Statistical Abstract, 1971*, p. 484.

35. That is, factor incomes, such as migrant workers' remittances or investment receipts, accruing to persons living in Syria, less the income, if any, earned in the domestic economy accruing to persons living abroad.

36. See al-ʿUlabī, *Anmāṭ Tawzīʿ ad-Dakhl*, Part 1, p. K. and Part 2, Appendix 3, Table 8.

37. Syria, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, *Annual Statistical Bulletin*, *1990*, p. 76.

38. Conversations with several farmers and farm workers in the Aleppo region, June 1985.

39. See Chapter 1, pp. 6 and 9.

40. Lynn Simarski, science writer at the Aleppo-based International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, "Mechanising the Lentil Harvest," *Middle East Agribusiness* 6.1 (January 1986), p. 24.

41. Based on figures obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform in December 1992.

42. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʿtamar al-ʿĀm as-Sābiʿ*, Economic Report, p. 121.

43. This price was quoted by *Tishrīn*, 16 June 1985.

44. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʿtamar al-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, pp. 153–54 and *al-Muʿtamar al-ʿĀm as-Sābiʿ*, p. 238.

45. Conversations with several farmers of the Buṣra region, including the eighty-year-old chief of al-Ḥamd clan, May 1980.

46. Conversations with Thābet al-Mahāynī, director general of the Damascus Chamber of Commerce (1971–1983), 11 December 1985 and 29 June 1996.

47. Volney, *Travels through Syria and Egypt*, 2:254 note.

48. Anonymous manuscript at the library of the American University of Beirut probably authored by Mīkhā'il Ṣfayr, a priest, and entitled *Kitāb-ul-Aḥzān fī Taʾrīkh Wāqiʿat-ish-Shām wa Jabal Lubnān* (The Book of Sorrows Relat-

ing to the Happenings in Damascus and Mount Lebanon) (n.p., 1860), p. 126.

49. Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 406/71/4694, E 1144/842/89, letter of 20 December 1932, from Consul Monck-Mason, Aleppo, to Sir John Simon, London.

50. Conversation with Thābet al-Mahāynī of the Damascus Chamber of Commerce, 11 December 1985.

51. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), *The Economic Development of Syria*, p. 89.

52. Conversations with Thābet al-Mahāynī, 11 December 1985 and 29 June 1996.

53. Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 406/44/4694, E 13008/85/44, enclosure 7 entitled "Note on the Law of Mortgage" accompanying letter of 10 October 1920 from Sir H. Samuel, Jerusalem, to Earl Curzon, London.

54. Ḥimādeh, *The Monetary and Banking System of Syria*, pp. 31–33.

55. Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 406/71/4694, E 1144/842/89, letter of 20 December 1932 from Consul Monck-Mason, Aleppo, to Sir John Simon, London.

56. Ḥimādeh, ed., *Economic Organization of Syria*, p. 321.

57. Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division, *Syria*, p. 295.

58. IBRD, *The Economic Development of Syria*, p. 89.

59. *Al-Akhbār* and *an-Nizām*, *Dalīl-uj-Jumhūriyyat-is-Sūriyyah*, p. 265.

60. Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1950*, p. 121.

61. IBRD, *Economic Development of Syria*, p. 89.

62. The preceding observations are based on conversations with farmers from the Ḥawrān, including Maḥmūd al-Ḥamd, chief of al-Ḥamd clan, and the son of Aḥmad Jamāl al-Ḥarīrī, ex-chief of al-Ḥarīrī tribe, May 1980.

63. For this saying see ābū Rāshid, Ḥawrān ad-Dāmiyah, p. 213.

64. IBRD, *The Economic Development of Syria*, p. 340.

65. Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1975*, p. 816.

66. Ibid., *1987*, p. 492.

67. Jumʿah, *at-Tamwīl-uz-Zirāʿī*, p. 12.

68. Based on figures in IBRD, *The Economic Development of Syria*, p. 244.

69. The fall in the official exchange rate per $1 was from 2.19–2.20 Syrian pounds in 1953 to 3.90–3.95 Syrian pounds in 1985 and 11.225 Syrian pounds in 1990.

70. The observations in the preceding two paragraphs are based on data in Office Arabe de Presse et de Documentation, *Etude documentaire*, p. 118; in al-Dbiyat, "Salamieh et sa région," p. 234; and Jumʿah, *at-Tamwīl-uz-Zirāʿī*, pp. 65–66 and 120.

71. Based on figures in Syria, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, *Annual Agricultural Statistical Abstracts* for various years.

72. Consult Table 20–1.

73. Based on figures in Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract*, *1996*, p. 111.

74. Based on figures in the sources mentioned in Table 3–7.

75. Middle East Economic Digest, *Syria*, p. 41.

76. Speech by Diyāb al-Māshī, People's Assembly session of 21 February 1977, *aj-Jarīdah ar-Rasmiyyah* No. 31 of 4 August 1977, p. 64.

77. Volney, *Travels through Syria and Egypt*, 2:147.

78. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria*, p. 299.

79. Lyde, *The Ansyreeh and Ismaeleeh*, p. 118.

80. For the term *maḥmiyya*, see aj-Jundī, *Taʾrīkh Maʿarrat-un-Nuʿmān*, Part 1, p.194.

81. Weakley, *Report*, p. 58.

82. Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, vol. 1, Part 1, p. 246.

83. Himadeh, ed. *Economic Organization of Syria*, pp. 345–46.

84. Bowring, *Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria*, pp. 123 and 134.

85. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria*, p. 295. According to the Syrian historian ʿAbd-ul-Karīm Rāfeq, early in the twentieth century the feddān ar-rūmī equaled about 13.68 hectares and the other feddān, which he identifies as feddān khaṭṭāt, 0.57 of a hectare; Rāfeq, "Economic Relations," p. 672.

86. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria*, p. 300.

87. Ibid., p. 303.

88. For this impost, see Bowring, *Report*, p. 123.

89. Burckardt, *Travels in Syria*, pp. 301–3.

90. For the karrūzā and its amount, I am indebted to an old peasant from Palmyra; conversation, 18 June 1985; for the other taxes

and dues, see Gharābiyyah, *Sūriyyah fī-l-Qarn at-Tāsiʿ ʿAshar*, pp. 61–62; and Himadeh, ed., *Economic Organization of Syria*, pp. 345–46 and 353–54; for the conversion value of Turkish into British currency, Weakley, *Report*, p. 21, and Great Britain, Foreign Office and the Board Trade, *Report for the Year 1912 on the Trade of the Aleppo Vilayet*, No. 5167, Annual Series, Diplomatic and Consular Reports, Turkey (London, 1913), p. 3.

91. For example, in 1912 the tithe accounted for 41.2 percent of the total revenue of the Aleppo Vilayet and amounted in that province alone to 28.2 million gold piastres or 256,795 pounds sterling. The animal head tax contributed 10.2 percent and the wirkō on both agricultural and urban land and tenements 10.3 percent; based on figures in Great Britain, *Report for the Year 1912*, pp. 10–11.

92. This observation is based on the contents of a petition by Damascenes sent in 1880 by the governor-general to the Sublime Porte relating to the incidence of the wirkō; see Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 424/106/11826, letter of 20 April 1880 from Vice-Consul Jago, Damascus, to Sir A. H. Layard.

93. Demands under such circumstances provoked something of a "riot" in the Ḥamāh area in 1911; Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 424/229, "Quarterly Report on the Affairs of Syria for the Quarter Ended September 30, 1911."

94. Latron, *La vie rurale*, p. 53, and Himadeh, ed., *Economic Organization of Syria*, pp. 347–50.

95. Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 406/69/4694, E 2645/171/89, letter of 7 May 1932 from Consul Hole, Damascus, to Sir John Simon, London.

96. For the fluctuations of the franc, see Asfour, *Syria*, p. 46.

97. Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division, *Syria*, p. 288.

98. United Nations, *Economic Developments in the Middle East*, p. 202.

99. Hamilton, *Syrian Taxation Report*, p. 8. In the 1950s the rates for the animal tax were slightly altered, with sheep and goats paying 1.5, camels 2.2, buffaloes 5.2, and pigs 8.2 Syrian pounds per head. The tax did not apply to sheep, goats, and pigs aged less than one year and camels aged less than two; IBRD, *Economic Development of Syria*, pp. 276–77.

100. An export duty on cereals was also instituted in 1952 but annulled in 1954, ibid., pp. 277–78.

101. Consult Chapter 17 and Table 17–2.

102. For relevant complaints by a peasants' representative in the People's Assembly, see Session of 14 January 1978, *aj-Jarīdah ar-Rasmiyyah* No. 49 of 21 November 1978, p. 42. See also *al-Baʿth*, 28 December 1984, p. 5; *ath-Thawrah*, 28 May 1986, p. 7; and the Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar al-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, p. 44.

103. *Tishrīn*, 10 March 1981, p. 5.

104. American Embassy, Damascus, Agricultural Attaché, Report No. SY 6002 of 21 February 1986, entitled "Syria: Annual Agricultural Situation Report," 1985, p. 26.

105. *Al-Baʿth*, 21 October 1986, p. 11, and 9 December 1986, p. 4.

106. U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Yearbook of Agriculture, 1960. Power to Produce* (Washington, D. C., 1960), p. 78.

107. Syria, State Planning Commission, *al-Khiṭṭah al-Khamsiyyah al-Khāmisah Littanmiyyah al-Iqtiṣādiyyah wa-l-Ijtimāʿiyyah 1981–1985* (The Fifth Five-Year Plan for Economic Expansion and the Advancement of Society) (Damascus, 1981), p. 93.

108. See, for example, *Tishrīn*, 9 July 1985.

109. Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division, *Syria*, pp. 248–49.

110. IBRD, *The Economic Development of Syria*, pp. 158–62 and 463–67.

111. Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract*, *1994*, p. 407.

112. U. S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1986* (Washington, D.C., 1986), pp. 103 and 107; and World Bank, *World Development Report*, *1993*, p. 293.

113. In 1974, 11,000 Syrian doctors were working abroad (see *The Times* [London], 17 November 1980, p. V), and only 2,666 in Syria (Syria, Ministry of Health, *Annual Statistical Report*, *1981*, p. 160).

114. Based on data in Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract*, *1994*, pp. 63 and 360–61.

115. IBRD, *The Economic Development of Syria*, p. 464.

116. Syria, Ministry of Health, *Annual Statistical Report*, *1981*, p. 169.

117. For details on the rural health centers and for the geographical imbalance in health

care delivery in the middle 1970s, see Drysdale, "The Regional Equalization of Health Care and Education," pp. 94–100.

118. In the mid-1980s, in the first phase of the inoculation campaign, 930,552 children under the age of five were inoculated in the entire country; *al-Baʿth*, 30 September 1986, p. 4, and 21 October 1986, p. 7; and *ath-Thawrah*, 30 November 1986, p. 9.

119. *The Times* (London), 17 November 1980, p. V; Middle East Economic Digest (MEED), *Syria*, pp. 28–29; *MEED*, 13 July 1984, p. 44; *Tishrīn*, 22 November 1985, p. 4; and *al-Baʿth*, 8 December 1986, p. 7.

120. Based on figures in Table 3–11 and in *ath-Thawrah*, 19 November 1986, p. 7, and on statistics relating to households, which in rural areas numbered 497,394 in 1960 and 732,343 in 1981 and in urban areas 313,579 in 1960 and 709,874 in 1981, Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract*, *1986*, p. 61.

121. The percentages are based on figures ibid., *1994*, pp. 63 and 230–31.

122. *Al-Baʿth*, 12 October 1986, p. 7, and 30 December 1986, p. 6.

123. Cited in Rabo, *Change on the Euphrates*, p. 49.

124. *Niḍāl-ul-Fallāḥīn* No. 1,329 of 14 October 1992, p. 5.

125. Based on figures in Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division, *Syria*, p. 187.

126. Based on figures in Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1963*, pp. 79–85.

127. For this system, consult Charles Issawi, *Egypt at Mid-century. An Economic Survey* (London, 1954), p. 67.

128. Speech by Dr. Nūr-ud-Dīn al-Atāsī, president of Syria, *al-Baʿth*, 19 April 1970, and the Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar al-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, p. 224.

129. Based on the percentages in Table 3–12 and on figures in Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Census of Population*, *1960*, pp. 2–3, and Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract*, *1994*, p. 77.

130. This may be inferred from figures in World Bank, *World Development Report*, *1993*, p. 294.

131. The problems confronting education are often frankly discussed in the Syrian press. See, for example, *al-Baʿth*, 21 October 1986, p. 6, and 6 November 1986, p. 7; and *ath-Thawrah*, 19 April 1986, p. 9, and 4 December 1986, p. 9. For earlier years consult also MEED, *Syria*, p. 38, and Drysdale, "The Regional Equalization," pp. 101–8.

Chapter 4
Economic Efficiency

1. *Tishrīn*, 12 June 1985, p. 4; see also *Tishrīn*, 25 June 1987, p. 5, and *ath-Thawrah*, 15 July 1987, p. 7.

2. *Al-Baʿth*, 23 October 1986, p. 7.

3. Ibid. For the condition of the Barada River, see also *ath-Thawrah*, 22 October 1986, p. 7.

4. *Ath-Thawrah*, 28 March 1987, p. 6.

5. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Sādis* p. 39.

6. Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1981*, p. 174; *1987*, p. 117; and *1994*, p. 104.

7. Consult *al-Baʿth*, 12 January 1987, p. 7.

8. Seale, *Asad*, p. 445.

9. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *The Economic Development of Syria*, p. 18; Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1993*, p. 35.

10. Ibid., *1986*, p. 29.

11. Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 371/75538, XL/A/11723. Undated confidential memorandum written in 1949 by J.H.B. Savage of the British Council, Damascus, giving the gist of his conversation on the Jezireh with Aḥmad Qassām, Syria's director of rural education.

12. Consult Chapter 3.

13. Based on figures in Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstracts, 1981*, p. 340; *1986*, p. 378; *1991*, p. 290; and *1994*, p. 294.

14. Based on figures ibid., *1963*, p. 208; *1986*, p. 380; and *1994*, p. 296.

15. Syria, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, *The Annual Agricultural Statistical Abstract, 1974*, p. 158, and Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1986*, p. 175.

16. Report No. SY 8524 A of 29 March 1985 from the Agricultural Attaché, American Embassy, Damascus, to the Foreign Agri-

cultural Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, entitled "Syria: Annual Agricultural Situation Report, 1984," p. 7.

17. Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstracts 1986*, p. 175; *1991*, p. 122; and *1994*, p. 124.

18. Rinderpest is a malignant and contagious disease marked by fever, dysentery, and inflammation of the mucous membranes. The rinderpest outbreaks occurred in 1982 and 1983; the disease was apparently introduced by the illegal import of cattle from southern Lebanon, but was checked through the slaughter of cows that came in contact with the diseased animals and other preventive measures. See Report No. SY 3002 of 31 March 1983 from the Agricultural Attaché, American Embassy, Damascus, to the Foreign Agricultural Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, entitled "Annual Situation Report, Syria (1982)," p. 6; and his Report No. SY 4004 of 22 February 1984 relating to the situation in 1983, p. 6.

19. Syria, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, *Annual Agricultural Statistical Abstract, 1974*, pp. 156–57 and 168; and Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstracts 1986*, pp. 175–77; and *1994*, pp. 124–26.

20. *Al-Baʿth*, 15 January 1987, p. 7; and Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstracts*, *1986*, p. 148; *1991*, p. 109; and *1994*, p. 111.

21. Reports No. SY 6001 of 28 January 1986 and No. SY 7002 of 27 January 1987 from the Agricultural Attaché, American Embassy, Damascus, to the Foreign Agricultural Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, entitled "Syria: Grain and Feed Annual Report," pp. 2–3, 11–12, and 2–3 and 8–10, respectively.

22. There are now three state-owned feed-mixing plants in Ḥamāh, Aleppo, and near Damascus, with a total annual capacity of more than 110,000 tons.

23. *Ath-Thawrah*, 28 February 1985, p. 7, *al-Baʿth*, 27 November 1986, p. 7, and 15 January 1987, p. 7; *Arab World Agribusiness* (London), 1.8–9 (1984): 24–25; *The Middle East* (London), February 1983, pp. 40–41; and reports of the U.S. Agricultural Attaché, American Embassy, Damascus, to the Foreign Agricultural Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, No. SY 6001 of 28 January 1986, p. 2; No. SY 3002 of 31 March 1983, p. 12; and No. SY 2004 of 9 March 1982, p. 15.

24. *Tishrīn*, 15 November 1985, p. 4; and *Middle East Economic Digest* (London), 12 May 1978, p. 50; 13 April 1979, p. 3; and 23 March 1984, pp. 55–56.

25. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, p. 56.

26. Between the dam and the location known as Halbiyyeh Zalbiyyeh.

27. *Ath-Thawrah*, 13 November 1985, p. 7; and *Tishrīn*, 25 November 1986, p. 4.

28. *Tishrīn*, 23, 24, and 25 November 1986, p. 4; *al-Baʿth*, 4 December 1986, p. 7; and *Middle East Economic Digest*, 23 March 1984, p. 56, and 4 October 1986, p. 27; and the Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Sabiʿ*, pp. 113–14. The 16 November Dam alone has made possible the irrigation of 14,000 hectares in the plains to the north and south of Latakia; *ath-Thawrah*, 30 November 1985, p. 5.

29. For example, in the index for 1963 wheat was assigned a relative weight of 356 out of a total of 1,000 for plant products, and only 136 out of a total of 723 in the index for 1985; see Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1963*, p. 267; and *1986*, p. 135.

30. United Nations, "Past Developments," p. 11.

31. In 1966–1970 the Euphrates project alone accounted for 69 percent of total planned agricultural investment. The share of "irrigation and land reclamation" was 16.5 percent and that of agriculture proper 14.5 percent, of which about two-thirds were for building silos, ibid., p. 49. For a discussion of the investment and agricultural growth trends before and after 1956, see also Hansen, "Economic Development in Syria," pp. 12–16.

32. The planned state investment in agriculture, irrigation and land reclamation, and the Euphrates project increased from 942 million Syrian pounds ($246.6 million) in 1966–1970 (United Nations, "Past Developments," p. 50) to 2.24 billion Syrian pounds ($586 million) in 1971–1975 (Center for Economic, Financial, and Social Research and Documentation S. A. L., Beirut, *La Documentation Arabe: The Syrian Economy in 1971* [Beirut, n.d.], p. 8) to 11 billion Syrian pounds ($2.8 billion) in 1976–1980 (*Middle East Economic Digest*, 12 August 1977, p. 40.)

33. *Economist* Intelligence Unit, *Country Profile Syria*, *1993/94*, pp. 23–24; and *al-Baʿth*, 7 March 1995, p. 6.

34. However, projects are already underway to clear large areas of the many boulders scattered over most of the Druze Mountain and the Ḥawrān; see *ath-Thawrāh*, 5 November 1986, p. 7.

35. *Al-Baʿth*, 30 December 1986, p. 6.

36. Ibid., 28 December 1984, p. 5; Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm al-Khāmis*, pp. 146–47; and *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, p. 157; *Middle East* (London), June 1981, p. 57; *Middle East Economic Digest*, 23 August 1986, p. 28; Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstracts*, *1986*, p. 198; *1991*, p. 162; and *1994*, p. 160.

37. Based on figures in Directorate of Statistics, Aleppo, *Statistical Abstract for Aleppo Province, 1984*, p. 76.

38. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, p. 154.

39. Information obtained from a tractor company in the Washington, D.C. area.

40. *Middle East Economic Digest*, 13–19 January 1984, p. 24.

41. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Khāmis*, p. 252; *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, p. 210; *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Sābiʿ*, p. 102.

42. *Al-Baʿth*, 8 July 1987, p. 4.

43. Ibid., 23 November 1986, pp. 6–7.

44. *Middle East* (London), August 1986, pp. 20–21.

45. *Al-Baʿth*, 30 June 1987, p. 5. One of the extension services on which we have more details is that of Aleppo province, which in 1986 embraced 62 extension units, 143 agronomists, 5 agricultural supervisors, and 10 veterinarians or veterinary superintendents, and had a budget of 16 million Syrian pounds. Its specialists covered an area of 690,724 cultivated hectares; ibid., 23 November 1986, p. 6.

46. Ibid., 8 July 1987, p. 6.

47. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, p. 127, and *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm Sābiʿ*, p. 186.

48. For this point, see *Middle East*, July 1985, p. 23.

49. United Nations, "Past Developments," p. 18.

50. For Syria's recent fertilizer situation, see Reports No. SY 3002 of 31 March 1983 and No. SY 7003 of 11 February 1987 from the Agricultural Attaché, American Embassy, Damascus, to Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, entitled "Annual Agricultural Situation Report, Syria," pp. 21–22 and 22, respectively.

51. Great Britain, Foreign Office and the Board of Trade, *Report for the Year 1901 on the Trade of Damascus*, No. 2832 Annual Series, London, 1902, p. 8; Bell, *Syria*, p. 120; and Weakley, *Report*, p. 196.

52. Great Britain, Admiralty, Naval Intelligence Division, *Syria*, p. 255; and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, *The Economic Development of Syria*, pp. 302–4.

53. Decision No. 97/T of 1972 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, *aj-Jarīdah ar-Rasmiyyah* of the Syrian Arab Republic, Part I, No. 42 of 1972, p. 1,891.

54. *Middle East* (London), October 1984, p. 27; *International Agricultural Development*, January/February 1985, pp. 22–23; Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, p. 125.

55. The Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm al-Khāmis*, p. 128.

56. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, p. 125.

57. Report No. SY 8003 of 11 February 1988 from the Agricultural Attaché, American Embassy, Damascus to Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, entitled "Syria: Annual Agricultural Situation Report, 1987," p. 3.

58. The amounts of official development assistance in the intervening and succeeding years in millions of dollars were as follows: 1982, 962; 1983, 813; 1984, 641; 1986, 728; 1987, 697; World Bank, *World Development Report, 1989*, pp. 203 and 241.

59. Based on figures in Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1986*, p. 61.

60. Ibid., pp. 652–53.

61. This is a rough inference from figures on per capita Net Domestic Product at factor cost, ibid., pp. 636–37.

62. For these decisions, see *Middle East Economic Digest*, 10 May 1991, p. 20, and 28 February 1992, p. 23.

63. *Al-Baʿth*, 7 March 1995, p. 6.

64. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm al-Khāmis*, p. 172. For the proportions

of holdings between 10 and 100 hectares and above 100 hectares, see Table 2–1.

65. For the policy of tajmīʿ see the Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm al-Khāmis*, pp. 171–77; *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, pp. 54 and 85, and *al-Muʾtamar-ul-ʿĀm as-Sābiʿ*, 8 March 1991 p. 128.

66. See Andrew Pearce, *Seeds of Plenty, Seeds of Want: Social and Economic Implications of the Green Revolution* (Oxford, 1980), p. 227.

67. *Ath-Thawrah*, 9 January 1987, p. 7; and *Tishrīn*, 5 September 1989, p. 10. See also the advertisements bringing into public notice the formation of such companies, such as those in *ath-Thawrah*, 28 December 1986, p. 2, and 7 January 1987, p. 5.

68. See *Middle East Economic Digest*, 26 January 1990, p. 25.

69. Patrick Seale, *Asad*, p. 445.

70. This is suggested by the quantity of barley reportedly stored in its state granaries. See Pettinato, *The Archives of Ebla* p. 157.

Chapter 5
Portraits of Peasants

1. *Muqaddimat-ul-ʿAllāmah Ibn Khaldūn*, Book 1, Part 2, Ch. 19, p. 142, and Book 1, Part 5, Ch. 8, p. 394; and the translation by Franz Rosenthal, *Ibn Khaldūn: The Muqaddimah* 1:289–90 and 2:335–36. Both traditions cited in the text are from *Saḥīḥ* (Collection of Traditions) of al-Bukhārī (Krehl edition; Leiden, 1862–1908), 2:67 and 1:214. The last-mentioned tradition is omitted from the Cairo edition of *al-Muqaddimah* that I consulted.

2. Letter of April 1888 from Engels to Margaret Harkness in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, n.d.), p. 480.

3. Balzac, *The Peasantry*, pp. 44, 86, 117.

4. Ibid, pp. 60–62.

5. Ibid, pp. 91 and 93.

6. Ibid, p. 11.

7. Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, vol. I, *The Overthrow of Tzarism*, translated by Max Eastman (New York, 1932), p. 404.

8. Henry Habib Ayrout, S. J., *The Egyptian Peasant*, pp. 139–40.

9. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, pp. xv–xvii.

Chapter 6
First Peasant Organizations

1. The guild of al-basātinah was in existence in the Ḥimṣ region as late as 1951; see Naaman, "Le pays de Ḥoms," pp. 194–96.

2. In an essay on the Syrian craft guilds in the Ottoman period, ʿAbd-ul-Karīm Rāfeq gives a list of these 163 corporations, including that of al-basātinah. See his *Buḥūth fī-t-Tārīkh*, pp. 162–63.

3. Qudsī, "Nubdhah Taʾrīkhiyyah." I am indebted to Professor Yūsuf Ibish for providing me with a copy of this paper and of the English version, which he published in 1967.

4. Ibid., pp. 8–14 and 24.

5. Ibid., p. 9.

6. Massignon, "Ṣinf," pp. 436–37.

7. Lewis, "The Islamic Guilds," p. 26.

8. Al-Masʿūdī, *at-Tanbīh wa-l-Ishrāf*, pp. 322–23.

9. Claude Cahen, "Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du moyen âge, II," *Arabica* 6 (1959), pp. 26–27, and "Y-a-t-il eu des corporations professionnelles dans le monde musulman classique?" pp. 51–63 in *The Islamic City*, edited by Hourani and Stern; and S. M. Stern, "The Constitution of the Islamic City," ibid., pp. 36–47.

10. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 96–101.

11. Gabriel Baer, "Guilds in Middle Eastern History," in Cook, ed., *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, pp. 20–22 and 29–30.

12. ʿAbd-ul-Karīm Rāfeq, *Buḥūth fi-t-Tārīkh*, pp. 160–92; and Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance*, pp. 200–13.

13. Aleppo Sharīʿah Court Register No. 11, p. 55, entry dated 29 Dhī-l-ḥijjah 1026 or 28 December 1617, cited by Rāfeq, *Buḥūth fi-t-Tārīkh*, p. 175.

14. Russell, *The Natural History of Aleppo*, 1:47.

15. Consult Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo*; and Būlus Qaraʾlī, ed., *Ahammu Ḥawādith Ḥalab*, based on a manuscript by Būlus Arūtīn, Maronite bishop of Aleppo, 1788–1850, Cairo, n.d.

16. Volney, *Travels through Syria*, 2:143.

17. Al-Ḥmūd, *al-ʿAskar fī Bilād-ish-Shām*, pp. 207–11.

18. For the coexistence of these two corps after 1660 and the enmity between them, con-

sult Rāfeq, *The Province of Damascus*, pp. 32–35.

19. Qudsī, "Nubdhah Taʾrīkhiyya," p. 23.

20. Consult Naʿmān Qasāṭlī (b. 1854), *ar-Rawḍah al-Ghannāʾ fī Dimashq al-Fayḥāʾ*, pp. 124–25 and 129–30; Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 424/106/11826, letter from Vassif Effendi Clician ("a gentleman in the confidence of Midhat Pasha") to Mr. Nicolson, Damascus, 28 February 1880; FO, Diplomatic and Consular Reports, *Turkey Report for the Year 1891 on the Trade of Damascus*, p. 3; and Reilly, "Economic Trends in Damascus and Its Hinterland," pp. 33, 36, and 78.

21. For these developments, consult Weakley, *Report*, pp. 77–111; Issawi, ed. *The Economic History of the Middle East*, pp. 248–57; Shimon Shamir, "The Modernization of Syria: Problems and Solutions in the Early Period of Abdülhamid," in Polk and Chambers, eds. *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East*, pp. 367–77; and Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy*, pp. 171–72 and 253–55.

22. Great Britain, Foreign Office and Board of Trade, *Report for the Year 1906 on the Trade of Damascus* (London, 1907), p. 17.

23. Weakley, *Report*, p. 207; based on figures in Great Britain, Foreign Office and Board of Trade, *Report for the Year 1888 on the Trade of Damascus* (London, 1889), p. 4; and in Weakley, *Report*, p. 34.

24. Great Britain, *Report for the Year 1901*, pp. 6–7 and Weakly, *Report*, p. 207.

25. Massignon, "La structure du travail à Damas," pp. 424–28 and 431.

26. Muḥammad Dīb and Muḥammad Ziyād, grandson and great-grandson, respectively, of Muḥammad Saʿīd Agha Shaykh al-Basātinah, conversation, Damascus, 11 January 1990.

27. Naaman, "Le pays de Ḥoms," p. 196.

28. For the opening of the rushdiye school at Dūmā, see ash-Shāliṭ and al-Waraʿ, "Dūmā Balad-ul-Kurūm," p. 74. For the existence of a Qurʾānic school there my source is Professor Yūsuf Ibish, conversation 15 August 1989.

29. Ash-Shāliṭ and al-Waraʿ, *Dūmā Balad-ul-Kurūm*, pp. 4–5; Shaykh ʿAbdallah ʿAllūsh, imām (prayer leader) of one of Dūmā's mosques, conversation, Dūmā, 5 January 1990.

30. I am indebted for this fact to Professor Yūsuf Ibish, whose family owned much land in the Ghūṭah; conversation, 15 August 1989.

31. ʿUmar Maḥmūd ash-Shāliṭ, an agronomist from Dūmā and president of its Municipal Council (1983–1987) and of the Damascus Agricultural Chamber since 1987; conversation, Dūmā, 5 January 1990.

32. Akram Ḥūrānī, leader of the Arab Socialist party (1950–1952) and of the Baʿth party (1952–1958), conversation, Paris, 15 July 1985.

Chapter 7
Ṣūfism among the Peasants

1. The observations in the preceding four paragraphs are based on Arberry, *Sufism*; Najjār, *aṭ-Ṭuruq-uṣ-Ṣūfiyyah fī Miṣr*; Zayʿūr, *Fī-l-ʿAqliyyat-iṣ-Ṣūfiyyah*; Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, pp. 432–39; Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, pp. 208–18; and Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 1:392–409, 2:201–54, and 3:122–23 and 158–61.

2. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, p. 216.

3. Antoine ʿAbdel Nour, *Introduction à l'histoire urbaine*, p. 376.

4. Conversation with this writer at Ḥaqlah in al-Maydān quarter of Damascus, 7 January 1990. I am indebted to Shaykh Aḥmad al-Ḥabbāl ar-Rifāʿī for arranging to take me to Shaykh as-Saqbānī's place of residence.

5. Sweet, *Tell Ṭoqaan*, p. 223.

6. Professor Yūsuf Ibish, conversation, 10 November 1989.

7. An-Najjār, *aṭ-Ṭuruq-uṣ-Ṣūfiyyah fī Miṣr*, pp. 89–90 and 92.

8. "Ar-Rifāʿī," *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 476.

9. An-Najjar, *aṭ-Ṭuruq-uṣ-Ṣūfiyyah fī Miṣr*, p. 98.

10. Lane, *Manners and Customs*, pp. 251–52.

11. ʿAbdel Nour, *Introduction à l'histoire urbaine*, pp. 377–78.

12. Al-Ḥallāq, *Ḥawādeth Dimashq al-Yawmiyyah*, pp. 91–92 notes; and Nicola A. Ziadeh, *Urban Life in Syria under the Early Mamlūks* (Beirut, 1953), p. 163.

13. Aj-Jundī, *Tārīkh Maʿarrat-in-Nuʿmān*, Part 2, pp. 215–16.

14. This is based upon the biographical details provided by Abū-l-Ḥuda aṣ-Ṣayyādī in his *Qilādat-uj-Jawāhir*, cited in al-Biṭār, *Ḥilyat-ul-Bashar fī Tārīkh-il-Qarn-ith-Thālith ʿAshar*, 1:494–95.

15. For an example, read the prayer quoted

by al-Ḥallāq, *Ḥawādeth Dimashq al-Yawmiyyah*, p. 53 and note.

16. Ibid., p. 91.

17. Aj-Jundī, *Tārīkh Maʿarrat-in-Nuʿman*, 1:163 and 260, and 2:215–16; and Abū Manneh, "Sultan ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd II," p. 139.

18. Statement of 31 January 1975 by eighty-year-old Munīb al-Yūsufī, a lawyer, an ex-employee of the Justice Department, a Maʿarrah deputy from 1954 to 1958, and member successively of the Arab Socialist party and the Baʿth party. The text of his statement is in Ḥannā, *al-Qaḍiyyat-uz-Zirāʿiyyah*, Part 2, pp. 454–55.

19. Aj-Jundī, *Tārīkh Maʿarrat-in-Nuʿman*, 1:260. Aj-Jundī attributes the discontinuation of the dhikr merely to the death of aṣ-Ṣayyādī.

20. Shaykh ʿAbdallah ʿAllūsh, imām of one of Dūmā's mosques, conversation, Dūmā, 5 January 1990.

21. Shaykh ʿAbd-ul-Ḥakīm ʿAbd-ul-Bāsiṭ Abū Fahd as-Saqbānī, conversation, al-Maydān quarter, 7 January 1990.

22. Ḥannā, *al-Qaḍiyyat-uz-Zirāʿiyyah*, 2:457–59.

23. The Ḥarīrī branch of the Rifāʿī order was founded by ʿAlī b. Abī-l-Ḥasan al-Ḥarīrī (d. 1247). For the relative strength of Āl az-Zuʿbī and Āl al-Ḥarīrī in the 1920s, consult Abū Rāshid, *Ḥawrān ad-Dāmiyah*, p. 39. For details on the influence of the two clans during the French occupation, in the postindependence period, and under the Baʿthists consult Chapter 2.

24. Shāhbandar (a leader of the 1925–1927 Syrian Revolt), *Thawrat-u-Sūriyyah al-Kubra*, p. 18.

25. See above, pp. 25–26.

26. Āl Jundī, *Tārīkh-uth-Thawrāt*, pp. 116–18, 126, and 128.

27. Ibid., p. 500.

Chapter 8
Peasant Rebellion and Defense

1. Al-Maqrīzī (1364–1442), *Kitāb-ul-Khiṭaṭ-il-Maqrīziyyah*, 1:87.

2. Bowring, *Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria*, p. 26. The preceding observations are based on Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria* (which includes his journal of a tour from Damascus into the Ḥawrān in 1812); Schumacher, *The Jaulan*; Abū Rāshid, *Ḥawrān ad-Dāmiyah* and *Jabal ad-Durūz*; and Andrew Vincent, "The Peasantry of the Ḥawrān in the Nineteenth Century: Tenuous and Peripheral Occupation," M.A. Thesis, American University of Beirut, 1982.

3. For a description of the maḥmiyyāt and their purpose, see aj-Jundī, *Tārīkh Maʿarrat an-Nuʿman*, vol. 1; for another description and for their incidence "in such numbers in the Ḥawrān," see Schumacher, *The Jaulan*, pp. 164–65.

4. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria*, p. 221. For a map indicating the deserted and intermittently inhabited villages in the early nineteenth century, consult Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers*, p. 20.

5. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria*, p. 212.

6. Ibid., p. 309.

7. Vincent, "The Peasantry of the Ḥawrān," pp. 91–92.

8. Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers*, pp. 53–54 and Ḥannā, *al-Qaḍiyyat-uz-Zirāʿiyyah*, 2:39–43.

9. The armed actions occurred in 1837, 1851, 1860, 1876, 1877, 1880, 1881, 1890, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1901, 1903, 1906, 1910, and 1925–1927; Abū Rāshid, *Jabal ad-Durūz*, pp. 96–100; Kurd ʿAli, *Khiṭaṭ-ush-Shām*, 3:101–10; and Ḥannā, *al-Qaḍiyyat-uz-Zirāʿiyyah*, 1:159 ff.

10. In 1806, 1808, 1811, 1815, 1834, 1844, 1852, 1855, 1858, 1870, 1877, 1880, and 1918–1921; Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairis*, pp. 32–38; Kurd ʿAli, *Khiṭaṭ-ush-Shām*, 3:27; Ḥannā, *al-Qaḍiyyat-uz-Zirāʿiyyah*, 1:162 and 171; Vincent, "The Peasantry of the Ḥawrān," pp. 49 and 62; Maʿoz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine*, pp. 109–11; Polk and Chambers, eds. *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East*, pp. 370–71; and Yūnis, *Thawrat-ush-Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī*.

11. Epistle 35, cited by Abu Izzedin, *The Druzes*, p. 221.

12. Ibid., p. 132.

13. Lyde, *The Ansyreeh and Ismaeleeh*, p. 127.

14. Kurd ʿAlī, *Khitat-ush-Shām*, 6:267.

15. Yūnis, *Thawrat-ush-Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-ʿAlī*, p. 67 n. 1.

16. Ibid., p. 212.

17. Abū Rāshid, *Jabal ad-Durūz*, pp. 99–100.

18. Dussaud, *Histoire et Religion des Noṣairis*, pp. 33–38 and Gharābiyyah, *Sūriyyah fī-l-Qarn-il-Tāsiʿ ʿAshar*, p. 113.

19. Anonymous manuscript at the library of the American University of Beirut, probably

authored by Mikhā'īl Ṣfayr, a priest, and entitled "Kitāb-ul-Aḥzān fī Ta'rīkh Wāqiʿat-ish-Shām wa Jabal Lubnān" (The Book of Sorrows Relating to the Happenings in Damascus and the Lebanese Mountain), n.p., 1860, p. 11.

20. Abū Rāshid, *Ḥawrān ad-Dāmiyah*, pp. 179–80 and *Jabal ad-Durūz*, pp. 51 and 243–44. For other details on Ismā'īl al-Aṭrash, see Abū Ṣāleḥ and Makārem, *Tārīkh-ul-Muwaḥḥidīn*, pp. 290ff.

21. Abū Rāshid, *Jabal ad-Durūz*, p. 94.

22. Abū Ṣāleḥ and Makārem, *Tārīkh-ul-Muwaḥḥidīn*, p. 295.

23. Abū Rāshid, *Jabal ad-Durūz*, pp. 97–98.

24. Ḥannā, *al-Qaḍiyyat-uz-Zirāʿiyyah*, 1:177; Abū Ṣāleḥ and Makārem, *Tārīkh-ul-Muwaḥḥidīn*, p. 297; Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers*, p. 92; and Abū Rāshid, *Jabal ad-Durūz*, p. 103.

25. For the Kisirwān agrarian revolt, consult al-ʿAqīqī, *Thawrah wa Fitnah fī Lubnān*.

26. Cited by Ḥannā, *al-Qaḍiyyat-uz-Zirāʿiyyah*, 1:180 and 195. The consonance between Shiblī's characterization of the peasants and that of Balzac (see above) will not escape attention.

27. Abū Rāshid, *Jabal ad-Durūz*, pp. 100–3; Ḥannā, *al-Qaḍiyyat-uz-Zirāʿiyyah*, 1:175–83; Abū Ṣaleḥ and Makārem, *Tārīkh-ul-Muwaḥḥidīn*, pp. 297–300; Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers*, pp. 92–93; and al-ʿAwdah, *Intifādat-ul-ʿĀmmiyyat-ul-Fallāḥiyyaḥ fī Jabal al-ʿArab*.

28. Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 371/52889, E 2571/2571/89, Shone, British Legation, Beirut, to Ernest Bevin, 8 March 1946.

29. Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, p. 133.

30. Jawbar, Jisrīn, ʿAqraba, ʿIrbīn, Rankūs, Ḥarastā, Barzah, ʿAyn Turmā, al-Mlayḥah, and Kfar Batnah; Āl Jundī, *Tārīkh-uth-Thawrāt*, pp. 334–36, 461–62, 482, 488, 495–97, 518, 544, 573, and 576. Except for Rankūs and Ḥarastā, all the villages named were located in the rural districts attached to the Damascus provincial center where, as late as 1945—that is, thirteen years before the agrarian reform—small landowners or owners of less than 10 hectares controlled 86 percent, and medium landowners or owners of 10 to 100 hectares 13 percent of all privately held land. The corresponding figures for the district of Dūmā, to which Rankūs and Ḥarastā belonged, were 32 percent and 29 percent. These two villages were situated in the western part of the district where small holdings predominated; Syria, Ministry of National Economy, *at-Taqsīmāt-ul--Idāriyyah fī-j-Jumhuriyat-is-Sūriyyah* (Damascus, 1952), pp. 4–5 and 10, and Bianquis, *La réforme agraire dans la Ghouta de Damas*, p. 47.

31. For example, the village of Mnīn and the Circassian village of Marj Sulṭān stood aloof; Āl Jundī, *Tārīkh-uth-Thawrāt*, pp. 359, 437, and 384. The latter village was Kfar Sūsah; ibid., p. 356.

32. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, p. 215.

33. Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon*, pp. 155 and 158.

34. Based on figures in Saʿīd Ḥimādeh, *an-Nizām an-Naqdī wa-l-Maṣrafī fī Sūriyyah*, p. 71, and as-Sibāʿī, *Adwāʾ ʿala-r-Raʾsmāl-il-Ajnabī*, p. 110.

35. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, p. 213.

36. Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 406/58/4694, E 4703/12/89, Vaughan-Russell to Austen Chamberlain, Damascus, 27 July 1926.

37. For other causes of the revolt, consult Shāhbandar, *Thawrat-u-Sūriyyah al-Kubra*, pp. 42–53, and Qarqūṭ, *Taṭawwur-ul-Ḥarakit-il-Waṭaniyyah*, pp. 43–45.

38. Namely, Shaykh Ṣāliḥ Ṭarbiyyah; Shāhbandar, *Thawrat-u-Sūriyyah*, p. 52, and Abū Ṣāleḥ and Makārem, *Tārīkh-ul-Muwaḥḥidīn*, pp. 320–22.

39. Shāhbandar, *Thawrat-u-Sūriyyah*, pp. 58–59.

40. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 161–62; Qarqūṭ, *Taṭawwur-ul-Ḥarakit-il-Waṭaniyyah*, pp. 61–63; and Great Britain, FO 406/46/4694, E 4408/117/89, Palmer to Earl Curzon, 25 March 1921.

41. Shāhbandar, *Thawrat-u-Sūriyyah*, pp. 72, 84, and 91–93. Al-Kharrāt, who was born in 1861, fell in the fighting in December 1925; ibid., and Āl Jundī, *Tārīkh-uth-Thawrāt*, p. 354.

42. For example, the chiefs of the villages of Barzah and al-Mlayḥah, the son of the chief of ʿAyn Turmā, and the mukhtārs or headmen of ʿAsāl al-Ward and ʿAyn at-Tīnah; Āl Jundī, *Tārīkh-uth-Thawrāt*, pp. 461, 495, 518, 556, and 575.

43. Yūnis al-Khanshūr, who later became a deputy, and Aḥmad and Rashīd al-Khanshūr,

who were killed during the revolt; Zurayq, *Tārīkh Dūmā*, pp. 123 and 194–95.

44. Great Britain, FO 406/58/4694, E 4703/12/89 Vaughan-Russell to Austen Chamberlain, 27 July 1926.

45. Abū Ṣāleḥ and Makārem, *Tārīkh-ul-Muwaḥḥidīn*, p. 351.

Chapter 9
Communists and the Peasants

1. Or perhaps it began on 28 October 1924. Compare Communist Party, *Qaḍāyā-l-Khilāf fī-l-Ḥizb-ish-Shuyūʿī-s-Sūrī* (Beirut, 1972), p. 5 with Couland, *Le mouvement syndical au Liban*, pp. 103–4 and Dakrūb, *Judhūr-us-Sindyānah al-Ḥamrāʾ*, pp. 17 and 136.

2. Couland, *Le mouvement syndical au Liban*, p. 105; and Dakrūb, *Judhūr-us-Sindyānah al-Ḥamrāʾ*, p. 265.

3. Yūsuf Yazbek, a founder of the party, conversation, March 1962. For other details on ash-Shimālī, see my *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton, 1978), pp. 382–83 and Couland, *Le mouvement syndical au Liban*, pp. 98ff.

4. Ash-Shimālī and Farīd Tuʿmah, also a tobacco worker by occupation. The other members were Yūsuf Yazbek, a clerk in the Immigration Department of the Port of Beirut; Artin Madoyan, a medical student and the son of a refugee shoemaker from Adana; and Haykazun Boyadjian, a student of dentistry from Zaḥleh; see my *Old Social Classes*, pp. 374 and 382.

5. Ash-Shimālī, Tuʿmah, and Nasīm ash-Shimālī, a brother of Fūʾād. The other two members were Madoyān and Boyadjian.

6. Fūʾād ash-Shimālī, Nasīm ash-Shimālī, and Nāṣir Ḥiddah.

7. Conversation, 13 January 1990, with Daniel Nuʿmeh, member of the party's Central Committee since 1954 and of its Politbureau since 1963.

8. This is confirmed by Artin Madoyan in his "Observations on the History of the Party" (in manuscript form); see Dakrūb, *Judhūr-us-Sindyānah al-Ḥamrāʾ*, p. 453. According to Bakdāsh, Fawzī az-Zaʿīm, a son of the religious shaykh Ṣalāḥ-ud-Dīn az-Zaʿīm and a nephew of Colonel Ḥusnī az-Zaʿīm, who pulled Syria's first military coup (that of 1949), also played a part in attracting him to the Communist party, *an-Nahj*, No. 22, November 1973; and Walīd-al-Muʿallem, *Sūriyyā, 1918–1958*, p. 100 note.

9. For the text of the program, see Dakrūb, *Judhūr-us-Sindyānah al-Ḥamrāʾ*, pp. 516–18 and Ḥannā, *al-Qaḍiyyat-uz-Zirāʿiyyah*, 2:298–301.

10. For example, they refused to be subordinated to the Palestine Communist party; see my *Old Social Classes*, pp. 382–83 and 385.

11. Ash-Shimālī apparently believed that in the Syrian context legal propaganda made more sense than clandestine action and, by acting on his beliefs, endangered the party's organizations; see his *Asās-ul-Ḥarakāt-ish-Shuyūʿiyyah*, 6 ff., and Couland, *Le mouvement syndical au Liban*, pp. 192–93.

12. Dakrūb, *Judhūr-us-Sindyānah al-Ḥamrāʾ*, p. 413.

13. The preceding observations are partly based on conversations with ʿAbdallah Ḥannā, 7 January 1990, and Daniel Nuʿmah, 13 January 1990. See also notes 4, 5, and 6.

14. Bakdāsh, *al-Ḥizb-ush-Shuyūʿī fī Sūriyyah wa Lubnān*, pp. 23–24.

15. For a fuller treatment of Bakdāsh's policy in this period, see my *Old Social Classes*, pp. 583ff.

16. Conversations in January 1990 with ʿAbdallah Ḥannā; Daniel Nuʿmah, who had charge of the Communist party organizations in the Ṭarṭūs and Latakia regions in the 1940s; and Antonius Tūma ʿUbayd of the Syrian Nationalist party, who has first-hand knowledge of rural political activities, particularly in the ʿAlawī countryside.

17. Muḥammad ʿAlī az-Zarqā (Arab ʿAlawī from Alexandretta, member of the Iraqi Central Committee, 1945) and Ilyās Murquṣ (Arab Christian from Latakia, ex-secretary of the Latakia Local Committee, and ex-member of the Syrian Central Committee), *Ṣafaḥāt Majhūlah*, pp. 95 and 150.

18. Daniel Nuʿmah, conversation, 13 January 1990.

19. *Niḍāl-ush-Shaʿb*, No. 49 of April 1949.

20. Bakdāsh, *Li-ajl-in-Niḍāl*, p. 26.

21. Ibid., pp. 15–17.

22. Daniel Nuʿmah, conversation, 13 January 1990.

23. I am indebted to C. Velud of the French Institute, Damascus, for first directing my attention to the strong presence of the communists in this village in the 1950s.

24. ʿAbdallah Ḥannā, conversation, 7 January 1990. I am also grateful to Ḥannā for providing me with a chapter on the rising of Almū Ḥasan from a book that he prepared and that is now out of circulation.

25. Communist Party, *Qaḍāyā-l-Khilāf fī-l-Ḥizb-ish-Shuyūʿī-s-Sūrī*, p. 419.

26. Daniel Nuʿmah, conversation, 13 January, 1990.

27. Syria, Ministry of Information, *Sūriyyat-uth-Thawrah fīʿĀmihah ar-Rābiʿ ʿAshar* (Revolutionary Syria in Its Fourteenth Year; Damascus, 1977), p. 21, and conversations with Badr-id-Dīn as-Sibāʿī, June 1985, and Daniel Nuʿmah and ʿAbdallah Ḥannā, January 1990.

28. Bakdāsh, *Ḥawla Qaḍiyyat-il-Islāḥ-iz-Zirāʿī fī Sūriyyah*, p. 42, and Dār Ibn Khadūn, *Qaḍāya-l-Khilāf fī-l-Ḥizb-ish-Shuyūʿī-s-Sūrī*, pp. 395–96.

29. The Syrian Communist Party (whose Politbureau consists of the veteran leaders Yūsuf Fayṣal, Ibrahīm Bakrī, Daniel Nuʿmah, Zuhayr abd-us-Ṣamad, Maurice Ṣalībī, Ramū Shaykho, ʿUmar as-Sibāʿī, and Khālid Ḥammāmī), *Wathāʾiq-ul-Muʾtamar-is-Sādis, 29–31 January 1987* (Damascus, 1988), p. 208.

30. Riyāḍ-ut-Turk, Ibrahīm Bakrī, Zuhayr ʿAbd-uṣ-Ṣamad, ʿUmar al-Qashshāsh, and Daniel Nuʿmah in a statement circulated in April 1972; see *an-Nahār* (Beirut), 7 April 1972. The other two members of the Politbureau were Bakdāsh and Yūsuf Fayṣal.

31. The Syrian Communist Party, *Wathāʾiq-ul-Muʾtamar-is-Sādis*, p. 152.

32. I heard the first rumor during my trip to Syria in January 1990. For the second rumor my source is an ʿAlawite. But it is difficult to say whether any of the rumors is consonant with the facts.

33. Badr-ud-Dīn as-Sibāʿī, conversation, June 1985. For the association of Riyāḍ-ut-Turk with the call of independence from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, see Syrian Communist Party, *Wathāʾiq-ul-Muʾtamar-is-Sādis*, p. 213.

34. Ibid., pp. 190–91 and 219.

35. Ibid., p. 220.

36. I am indebted to Badr-id-Dīn as-Sibāʿī for the biographical details relating to the leaders of the various factions. Yūsuf Fayṣal was reelected as secretary general of the mainstream faction in 1991; *Tishrīn*, 21 October 1991.

37. Dār Ibn Khaldūn, *Qaḍāya-l-Khilāf f-il-Ḥizb-ish-Shuyūʿī-s-Sūrī*, p. 29.

38. Syrian Communist Party, *Wathāʾiq-ul-Muʾtamar-is-Sādis*, p. 21.

Chapter 10
The Arab Socialists

1. Conversations with Akram Ḥūrānī, leader of the Arab Socialist party, Damascus, 18 July 1958; Beirut, 28 February 1970; and Paris, 15 July 1985; and with Sharīf ar-Rās, a leading member of the party, Damascus, 16 July 1958.

2. Conversation, 15 July 1985.

3. These figures are taken from Weulersse, *Le pays des Alaouites*, 1:363.

4. Bell, *Syria*, p. 224. In the 1920s Bell was the oriental secretary of the British High Commissioner in Iraq.

5. Mukram al-Barāzī (born 1918), conversation, 11 September 1987.

6. Conversation with this writer, Cairo, April 1980.

7. Conversation with Mukram al-Barāzī, 11 September 1987, and with his son Tammām, 5 September 1987 and 19 August 1990. The Arabic word *ḍayʿah* signifies landed estate or small village.

8. Conversation with Tammām al-Barāzī.

9. According to Dr. Faysal ar-Rukbī, a physician from Ḥamāh and a supporter of Ḥūrānī, who was kind enough to conduct an inquiry in this connection on my behalf, the Ḥūrānī family stemmed from the Ḥawrān tribe of al-Ḥalqiyyīn and came originally from Jāsim, a village in the Ḥawrān's district of Azraʿ; Dr. ar-Rukbī's letter to this writer of 24 November 1991. Akram Ḥūrānī, conversation, 15 July 1985.

10. Akram Ḥūrānī, conversation, 15 July 1985.

11. This is based on Ḥūrānī's own statements to this writer. Others, however, relying on P.P.S. sources, suggest that Ḥūrānī's links with the P.P.S. continued beyond 1938. See Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, pp. 40–41, and Muḥammad Jamāl Bārūṭ, "Concerning Ḥurānist Populism in Syria," *al-Fikr-ud-Dīmuqrāṭī*, No. 11 of 1990, p. 93.

12. Conversations with Ṣalāḥ-id-Dīn al-Bīṭār, 13 July 1958; Sharīf ar-Rās of Ḥamāh, 16 July 1958; and Akram Ḥūrānī, 18 July 1958, 28 February 1970, and 15 July 1985.

13. Ḥizām Zuhūr ʿAdī, a member of an old Arab Socialist family, cited by Bārūt, "Concerning Ḥurānist Populism," p. 94 and p. 98 n. 51.

14. Akram Ḥūrānī, Badr ʿAllūsh, Saʿd-ud-Dīn al-Khānī, and Khalīl Kallās.

15. Dr. Najīb ʿAbd-ur-Razzāq.

16. ʿAlī ʿAdī, an elementary school teacher, and ʿUthmān Ḥūrānī, a relative of Akram, a preparatory school teacher, and, later on, director of education in the Druze Mountain.

17. Nakhleh Kallās.

18. Khalīl and Nakhleh Kallās.

19. Akram Ḥūrānī.

20. ʿAlī ʿAdī.

21. Badr ʿAllūsh and Saʿd-ud-Dīn al-Khānī.

22. The two Kallāses.

23. ʿUthmān Ḥūrānī.

24. Najīb ʿAbd-ur-Razzāq.

25. I am indebted to Akram Ḥūrānī for the biographical details relating to his associates.

26. Akram Ḥūrānī and Khalīl Kallās.

27. Amjad Ṭarābulsī, Ḥikmat Ḥāshim, Nūr-ud-Dīn Ḥātūm, Ṣalāḥ ʿUmar Pasha, and Jawdat al-Imām.

28. Yaḥya az-Zarqā.

29. Ihsān Ḥuṣnī.

30. George Ḥraykah from Mḥardeh, a village west of Ḥamāh; ʿAbd-ul-Ḥalīm Qaddūr from Qārrah, a village 45 kilometers south of Ḥimṣ; and Anṭūn Maqdisī, from the rural town of Yabrūd in the Qalamūn region.

31. The first four named in n. 27 and Anṭūn Maqdisī.

32. Khalīl Kallās, ʿAbd-ul-Ḥalīm Qaddūr (later a judge), and George Ḥraykah.

33. Akram Ḥūrānī, who was a lawyer by training, and Iḥsān Ḥusnī, who was a secondary school teacher.

34. Jawdat al-Imām.

35. Yaḥya az-Zarqā.

36. Iḥsān Ḥusnī, Khalīl Kallās, George Ḥraykah, and Anṭūn Maqdisī. I am indebted to Maqdisī for some of the biographical data in this paragraph, conversation, 10 December 1992. The rest of the data were obtained from Akram Ḥūrānī.

37. Conversation with Akram al-Ḥūrānī, 15 July 1985.

38. Idem.

39. Sharīf ar-Rās of Ḥamāh, conversation, 16 July 1958.

40. Notably in the villages of Mḥardeh, Suqaylibiyyah, Kfur Baham, and ʿAyyū.

41. Notably in the areas of an-Nabak, Dayr ʿAtiyyah, and al-Ḥisyah.

42. Akram Ḥūrānī, conversation, 15 July 1985.

43. Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate*, p. 338.

44. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Economic Developments in the Middle East*, p. 181; see Table 4–6 above.

45. Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East*, p. 93.

46. Mundhir al-Mawṣīlī (an Arab Socialist activist), *Dhikriyāt. Marāhil-ul-Ḥizb-iʾArabī-l-Ishtirākī kamā ʿIshtuha* ("Reminiscences. The Stages of the Arab Socialist Party as I Lived Them"), *al-ʿArabī al-Ishtirākī*, April 1985, p. 3. I am indebted to Ḥūrānī for providing me with this and other issues of his party's journal.

47. Akram Ḥūrānī, conversation, 15 July 1985.

48. Sharīf ar-Rās, conversation, 16 July 1958.

49. *Al-ʿArabī al-Ishtirākī*, July 1985, p. 2.

50. Sharīf ar-Rās, conversation, 16 July 1958.

51. Akram Ḥūrānī, conversation, 15 July 1985, and al-Mawsilī, "Reminiscences," p. 3.

52. *Al-Ishtirākiyyah* No. 4, 21 September 1951, p. 1.

Chapter 11
The Old Baʿth

1. For details relating to the beginnings of the Baʿth party, consult my *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton, 1978), pp. 722ff.

2. For the Military Committee, see Table 12–1.

3. Aj-Jundī, *al-Baʿth*, p. 45, and interviews with Dr. Sāmī aj-Jundī, as-Salamiyyah, 28 November 1992; with Dr. Wahīb al-Ghānem, Latakia, 3 December 1992, and with Dr. Yorgī Ḥakīm, Washington, D.C., 24 April 1991.

4. Michel ʿAflaq, *Nuqṭat-ul-Bidāyah*, 2nd ed. (Beirut, 1971), pp. 287 and 291.

5. The observations in this and the preceding paragraph are based on interviews with Michel ʿAflaq, 9 July and 13 July 1958, and Ṣalāḥ-id-Dīn al-Bīṭar, 13 July 1958 and 7 December 1970.

6. Conversation with Thābet al-Mahāynī, a native of al-Maydān and a leading Arab nationalist, 22 April 1991.

7. For Yūnis as-Sabʿāwī, a founder of the

Arab Nationalist party, consult my *Old Social Classes*, pp. 456–58.

8. Conversations with Qāsim Ṭwayr, a member of the Albū ʿUbayd, 5 June 1980; Jalāl as-Sayyid, 1 June 1985; and ʿAbd-uṣ-Ṣamad Ḥayzah, a member of the Shuyūkh, 17 June 1985. This paragraph is also based on as-Sayyid, *Hizb-ul-Baʿth-il-ʿArabī*, pp. 15–29.

9. Interview with Zakī al-Arsūzī by this writer, Damascus, 17 July 1958.

10. The poet Sulaymān al ʿĪsa, an Alexandrettan disciple of al-Arsūzī, "The Beginnings of the Arab Baʿth," *al-Munāḍil* (an internal Baʿth periodical), No. 84 of April 1976, pp. 58–60.

11. The observations in the preceding five paragraphs are based on the sources mentioned in the preceding two notes and on my interviews with Dr. Sāmī aj-Jundī, 28 November 1992, and Dr. Wahīb al-Ghānem, 3 December 1992, as well as on aj-Jundī, *al-Baʿth*, pp. 19–32; and the account of Baʿthist beginnings given by Dr. Wahīb al-Ghānem in *al-Munāḍil*, Nos. 90–97 of October to December 1976 and January to May 1977.

12. ʿAflaq, *Fī Sabīl-il-Baʿth* 1959 edition, p. 87.

13. For Dr. al-Ghānem, consult Table 11–1.

14. Democratic Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Dirāsah Awwaliyyah Ḥawla Naqd Tajribat-il-Ḥizb*, p. 45.

15. Shiblī al-ʿAysamī, an old Baʿthist, interview, *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī*, 13 May 1988.

16. Arab Socialist Baʿth Party, *Niḍāl-ul-Baʿth*, Part 4 (Beirut, 1971), p. 20.

17. "The Beginnings in the Recollection of Dr. Wahīb al-Ghānem," *al-Munāḍil*, No. 95 of March 1977, p. 9.

18. See my *Old Social Classes*, p. 730.

19. Ibid., pp. 727–28; Jalāl as-Sayyid, Ḥizb-ul-Baʿth al-ʿArabī, pp. 29–30; and aj-Jundī, *al-Baʿth*, p. 38.

20. Fāyez an-Nāṣir, a native of the Ḥawrān and member of the Baʿth (Regional) Command, conversation, 7 January 1990; Muḥammad Ḥasan Mayḥūb, deputy chief of the Peasants' General Union, conversation, 13 January 1990. Fāyez Kajak, a Baʿthist from Tall Kalakh and chief of the Ḥimṣ Peasant Union, conversation, 9 January 1990 and *al-ʿArabī al-Ishtīrākī*, July 1985, p. 2.

21. ʿAflaq, *Fī Sabīl-il-Baʿth*, 1959 edition, pp. 91–95 and 155–57.

22. Akram al-Ḥūrānī, conversation, 18 July 1958.

23. Ṣalāḥ-ud-Dīn al-Bīṭār, conversation, 7 December 1970.

24. Muḥammad Ḥasan Mayhūb of the General Peasants' Union and Nimr ʿAdwān, editor of *Niḍāl-il-Fallāḥīn*, conversations, 13 January 1990.

25. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Azamatu Ḥizbina. Naḍhrah ʿĀmmah*, pp. 1–7.

26. *Al-Ahrām* Institution, *Maḥādir-u-Muḥādathāt-il-Waḥdah*, p. 73.

27. ʿAflaq made this statement on 23 October 1968 in the presence of this writer.

Chapter 12
The "Transitional" Baʿth

1. See Seale, *Asad*, pp. 61–62.

2. Conversation of Aḥmad al-Mīr with this writer, Maṣyāf, 3 December 1992.

3. The most noteworthy of the officers representing the classical Baʿth in the army were Maʾmūn al-Bīṭār and Bashīr Ṣādeq, both Sunnīs from Damascus, and Ḥusayn Ḥiddeh, also a Sunnī but from Nabak (Colonel ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd as-Sarrāj, conversation, Cairo, April 26, 1980). Captain Maʾmūn al-Bīṭār, a brother of Dr. Midḥat al-Bīṭār (see Table 11–1), was the commander of the artillery in the Inqāḍh (Deliverance) Army that rushed to Palestine in 1948, and was killed in the battle of Mishmār Haʿamīk in the region of Majdū on the road between Jenin and Haifa (*al-Munāḍil*, No. 160 of May 1983, pp. 56–58). Bashīr Ṣādeq was a counselor at the Syrian Embassy in Moscow in March 1963. Later he sided with Amīn al-Ḥāfiz in the ensuing contest for power (*an-Nahār* [Beirut], 28 July 1963). Ḥusayn Ḥiddeh did not come into view in the post-1963 period. Ṣalāḥ-ud-Dīn al-Bīṭār, conversation, 7 December 1970, and ar-Razzāz, *at-Tajribah al-Murrah*, pp. 31 and 33–40.

4. Hazīmah was given the epithet "al-Muhannad" because he carried a heavy sword made of Indian steel. In time this surname was changed into Hunaydī.

5. Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī, secretary general of the Baʿth Regional Command, 1963–1964, conversation, 27 June 1991; and Abū Rāshid, *Ḥawrān ad-Dāmiyyah*, p. 186.

6. Dr. Jabr al-Aṭrash, conversation, 30 June

1985; Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī, conversation, 27 June 1991; and Āl Jundī, *Tārīkh-uth-Thawrat-is-Sūriyyah*, p. 244.

7. Abū Rāshid, *Ḥawrān ad-Dāmiyyah*, p. 39, and conversation with Fāyiz an-Nāṣir, a native of the Ḥawrān and member of the Baʿth Regional Command from 1985 to the present, 7 January 1990.

8. For the Banī Suwaydān, see Abū Rāshid, *Ḥawrān ad-Dāmiyyah*, p. 179.

9. George Tuʿmah, conversation, March 1986.

10. In Ṭlās's words, "we and the Firzāt constituted one family from olden times," Army Corps General Muṣṭafa Ṭlās, *Miʾrāt Ḥayātī*, p. 39. Conversation with a man from the Ḥimṣ province who wished to remain nameless.

11. Ṭlās, *Miʾrāt Ḥayātī*, pp. 22, 24, and 26–28.

12. My source for the local esteem of the Firzāt is the same inhabitant of the Ḥimṣ province who insists on anonymity.

13. The Ummār owned the villages of Barrah, Tall-it-Tūt, Abū Rabbāḥ, Mālṭah, and al-Khafiyyah, among others.

14. The preceding observations are based essentially on an interview in January 1990 with Aḥmad ʿAlī aj-Jundī, brother of Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAlī aj-Jundī. *Salamiyyah fī Khamsīn Qarnan*, a work by Maḥmūd Amīn, a supporter of the Ummār, has also been consulted. The figures for the population of Salamiyyah were taken from Himadeh, ed., *Economic Organization of Syria*, p. 8, and al-Gaylānī, *Muḥāfazat Ḥamāh*, p. 93.

15. These are the words of Aḥmad al-Mīr who, in a conversation with this writer, denied emphatically that he was the commander of the whole Golan Front.

16. Interview with Aḥmad al-Mīr, Maṣyāf, 3 December 1992. The words in quotes are al-Mīr's own words.

17. Interview with Dr. Sāmī aj-Jundī, Salamiyyah, 28 November 1992.

18. I am indebted for information regarding Muḥammad ʿUmrān to the Syrian from the district of Jubb-il-Jarrāḥ referred to in the text, who chose to remain nameless. I am also under obligation to ʿAlī al-Khalīl, member of the Baʿth National Command from 1964 to 1966 (conversation, Beirut, January 1978).

19. See Āl aj-Jundī, *Tārīkh-uth-Thawrāt-is-Sūriyyah*, pp. 32–33.

20. Aj-Jundī, *al-Baʿth*, p. 143.

21. Interview with Akram al-Ḥūrānī, Paris, 15 July 1985.

22. The observations in this paragraph relating to Ṣalāḥ Jadīd and his family are based in part on conversations with Antonius Tūmā ʿUbayd and Salīm al-Bīṭār, both SSNP activists, 8 January 1990; and Naṣrī Naṣṣār, an ex-army officer and SSNP affiliate, 25 July 1989. I am also indebted to two knowledgeable former Baʿthists, Maʿan Bashshūr of Ṣafītah and Raghīd aṣ-Ṣulḥ of Beirut. For the matter of ʿAdnān al-Mālkī, it is worth reading the account given by his brother, Riyāḍ al-Mālkī, in *Dhikriyāt ʿala Darb-il-Kifāḥ*, pp. 173–96.

23. Weulersse, *Paysans de Syrie*, p. 187; For the relevant policies of the "Mandate," consult ibid., especially pp. 175–98; Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 44–66 and 213–14; Yāsīn, *Ḥikāyat-ul-Arḍ*, pp. 16–24; as-Sibāʿī, *Adwāʾ ʿala-r-Raʾsmāl-il-Ajnabī* chapter 2; and Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon*, pp. 271–83.

24. The 1912 estimate is by Jean A. Sorel, *Le mandat français et l'expansion économique de la Syrie et du Liban*, p. 126, cited by as-Sibāʿī, *Adwāʾ ʿala-r-Raʾsmāl-il-Ajnabī*, p. 225. The percentages for 1944 and 1955 are based on official estimates and are cited, respectively, ibid., p. 226 and Yāsīn, *Ḥikāyat-ul-Arḍ*, p. 35.

25. Ar-Razzāz, *at-Tajribah al-Murrah*, pp. 131, 138–39, and 158–60; and aj-Jundī, *Tārīkh-uth-Thawrāt-is-Sūriyyah*, pp. 136–37. The Baʿth Regional Command itself conceded in a 1966 internal publication (*Azamat-ul-Ḥizb wa Ḥarakat 23 Shbāṭ*) that in the "initial circumstances" and "difficulties" attending the March 1963 coup, "friendship, family relationships, and sometimes mere personal acquaintance" became the basis for admission into the army. A translation of part of this publication is in Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*, pp. 114–24. The quoted passage is on p. 118.

26. Brayz, *Suqūṭ-ul-Jawlān*, pp. 29–30.

27. aj-Jundī, *Tārīkh-uth-Thawrāt-is-Sūriyyah*, pp. 154–55. In his memoirs, General ʿAbd-ul-Karīm Zahr-ud-Dīn, Syria's chief of staff from 1961 to 1963, maintained that the number of officers in 1961 added up to about 1800; see his *Mudhakkirātī ʿan Fatrat-il-Infiṣāl fī Sūriyyah* (Beirut, 1968), p. 481.

28. Ministers of defense were, successively, Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣūfī, Ziyād al-Ḥarīrī, Amīn al-Ḥāfez, ʿAbdallah Ziyādeh, Mamdūḥ Jābir,

Ḥamad ʿUbayd, Muḥammad ʿUmrān, and Ḥāfez al-Asad. Chiefs of staff were, successively, Ziyād al-Ḥarīrī, Amīn al-Ḥāfez, Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, Muḥammad Shnewī, and Aḥmad Suwaydānī.

29. ʿAbd-ul-Ḥamīd as-Sarrāj, conversation, Cairo, 26 April 1980. Because of a typing error that I failed to detect, this figure of 55 percent appeared as 65 percent in an article that I published in vol. 35.3 (Summer 1981) of *Middle East Journal*.

30. I an indebted for the details relating to the composition of the Troupes Spéciales to Professor R. Bayly Winder, who kindly provided me with a copy of an unpublished paper on the subject prepared by him in March 1959. Pages 14–15 of the paper have reference.

31. *New York Times*, 26 April 1963.

32. Cordesman, *The Arab-Israeli Military Balance*, pp. 40 and 137.

33. *Jaysh-ush-Shaʿb* (The Army of the People) (Damascus), Nos. 995–96, 3 August 1971, p. 10.

34. Consult Chapter 3.

35. Article 1 of Decree No. 746 issued on October 24, 1953 by Syria's Ministry of National Defense, *aj-Jarīdat-ur-Rasmiyyah*, No. 69 of 12 November 1953, p. 5,326.

36. Article 7 of Decree No. 35 of March 4, 1964, issued by the Chairman of the National Council of the Revolutionary Command, *aj-Jarīdat-ur-Rasmiyyah*, No. 10 of 1964, p. 2,493.

37. Article 2 of Decree No. 7 of January 10, 1978, *aj-Jarīdat-ur-Rasmiyyah*, No. 49 of 21 November 1978, p. 117. In 1968 $3,000 officially exchanged for 11,460 Syrian pounds. In 1978, $5,000 officially exchanged for 19,750 Syrian pounds.

38. Ziyād Ḥarīrī played a prominent role in the March 1963 coup and held the post of chief of staff from March to July 1963, and that of minister of defense from May to July 1963. For Amīn al-Ḥāfez, consult Table 12–1.

39. Fahd ash-Shāʿir was the commander of the Golan Front in 1964 and deputy chief of staff in 1965. In outlook he was close to the old-line leader Michel ʿAflaq, and in 1966 headed an underground military organization. For Ḥāṭūm, consult Table 12–1. For Suwaydānī, see p. 152 above.

40. For this detail of information I am indebted to ʿAlī al-Khalīl, member of the Baʿth National Command from 1964 to 1966, conversation, Beirut, January 1978.

41. Aj-Jundī, *al-Baʿth*, pp. 136–37.

42. Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Census of Population, 1960*, p. 13; Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census in the Syrian Arab Republic, 1970*, 1:1; Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population . . . According to Administrative Divisions, 1981, Province of the City of Damascus* (Damascus, 1988), p. 4.

43. Idem, *Statistical Abstract, 1989*, p. 52.

44. Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Census of Population, 1960*, p. 165; Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1972*, pp. 400–1; ibid., *1981*, p. 135; ibid., *1986*, p. 108; and ibid., *1994*, p. 82. The figure for 1985 excludes the number of employees in the office of the president. The figure for 1992 excludes the number of employees in the offices of the president and the prime minister as well as in the military-sector construction companies.

45. Shiblī al-ʿAisamī, member of the Baʿth National Command, 1964–1966, in a statement to *al-Waṭan-ul-ʿArabī*, *Sūriyyah al-Ḥurrah*, No. 5, August/September 1988.

46. Aj-Jundī, *al-Baʿth*, p. 130.

47. This is a verse composed by as-Samaw'al b. ʿĀdiyā, a pre-Islamic poet. For the text of al-Ḥāfez speech, see *ath-Thawrah*, 17 August 1963, and Zahr-ud-Dīn, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 481–82.

48. Ḥamūd-ush-Shūfī, Baʿth Regional Command's secretary general from September 1963 to February 1964, conversation, 10 July 1991.

49. *L'Orient* (Beirut), 5 September 1967. The paper cited two estimates. The other, which put the "active" membership at 12,000, was too high when compared with the accurate figures we have for 1971 (see Table 13–1).

50. Democratic Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-ʿAwāmilu*, p. 61.

51. Conversation, December 1964, with a knowledgeable member of the Baʿth party who did not wish to be identified.

52. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *an-Nizām ad-Dākhilī* (Internal Rules) (1968), Introduction, Clause 5, p. 60, and Baʿth National Command, *Dirāsāt Tanzīmiyyah* (Organizational Studies),

1970–1980 (Damascus, 1983), p. 85. Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī, secretary general of the Baʿth Regional Command from September 1963 to February 1964, conversation, 27 June 1991.

53. See above, pp. 158–60ff.

54. Office Arabe de Presse et de Documentation, ed., *Etude documentaire sur l'agriculture Syrienne*, pp. 33, 41, 44, 113.

55. Hansen, "Economic Development in Syria," p. 38.

56. ʿAbd-ul-Karīm aj-Jundī, see Table 12–1.

57. Dr. Ibrahīm Mākhūs, conversation, Algiers, 16 March 1986.

58. Aj-Jundī, *Tārīkh-uth-Thawrāt-is-Sūriyyah*, p. 152.

59. Based on figures in Tables 19 and 20 of Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Natāʾiju Baḥth-il-ʿAyyinah as-Sukkāniyya l-il-Quwwat-il-Bashariyyah wa Quwwat-il-ʿAmal fi-l-Quṭr-il-ʿArabi-l-Sūrī* (Results of the Study of the Population Sample for Manpower and the Labor Force in the Syrian Arab Republic), (Damascus, September 1972).

60. See also above, p. 156.

61. For details concerning their enhanced share on various type of lands, consult Office Arabe de Presse et de Documentation, *Etude documentaire*, pp. 57–58, and Yāsīn, *Ḥikāyat-ul-Arḍ*, pp. 82–83.

62. Internal Circular No. 117/259 issued by the Baʿth Regional Command on 8 August 1967 and entitled "Hawla-l-Ittiḥad al ʿĀm l-il-ʿUmmāl" (Concerning the General Workers' Union). I am indebted for a copy of this circular to Fawwāz Ṭarabulsi, an ex-Baʿthist.

63. Conversation with this writer, 10 July 1991.

64. Ar-Razzāz, *at-Tajribah al-Murrah*, p. 149.

65. Dr. Ibrahīm Mākhūs, then deputy premier, admitted in 1986 that "there was a gap between our pronouncements on 'a people's war' and our material possibilities." Conversation, Algiers, 16 March 1986.

66. Consult Seale, *Asad*, pp. 144 ff.

67. *L'Orient* (Beirut), 5 September 1967.

68. Ibid.

69. *Al-Anwār* (Beirut), 1 February 1967.

70. *L'Orient* (Beirut), 2 March 1968.

71. *An-Nahār* (Beirut), 16 February 1968.

72. *L'Orient* (Beirut), 5 September 1967.

73. *An-Nahār* (Beirut), 16 February 1968.

74. *Al-Ḥurriyyah* (Beirut), 14 October 1968.

75. Ibid., 25 October 1968.

76. Democratic Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-ʿAwāmilū*, pp. 64–65.

77. Internal Circular No. 586/32 of 28 February 1969 from the secretary general of the Baʿth Regional Command to all party branches.

78. *An-Nahār* (Beirut), 3 March 1969.

79. Ibid., 5 March 1969.

80. Ibid., 1 April 1969 and 29 April 1969.

81. *Aṣ-Ṣayyād* (Beirut), 22–29 October 1970, and *L'Orient* (Beirut), 9 November 1970.

82. See Seale, *Asad*, p. 158.

83. Democratic Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-ʿAwāmilu*, p. 51.

84. *International Herald Tribune* (Paris), 14–15 November 1970.

85. *Al-Ḥawādeth* (Beirut), 20 November 1970.

86. *Ar-Rāyah* (organ of the civilian wing of the Baʿth party), 14 November 1970.

87. Democratic Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-ʿAwāmilu*, p. 38.

Chapter 13
The Post-1970 Baʿth

1. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Taqārīru wa Muqarrarāt* (1971), pp. 71–72.

2. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Muqarrarātu wa Tawṣiyātu* (1988), pp. 5–6.

3. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Taqārīr-ul-Muʾtamar-il-Quṭrī-th-Thāmin. At-Taqrīr-us-Siyāsī*, p. 7.

4. *New York Times*, 29 November 1975.

5. ʿAḍaymah, *Taḥlīl Rifʿat al-Asad*, p. 673.

6. Articles 5(1) and 6(1b) of the party's *an-Niḍhāmu-d-Dākhilī*, as amended by the 1975 Twelfth National Congress (1975), pp. 12 and 14.

7. The percentages for the age group in the population have been computed in the rough on the basis of figures in Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1992*, p. 60.

8. That is, of the Soviet citizens above the age of eighteen. The percentage is for 1973 when the Soviet party members and candidates amounted to 14,821,031; Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, *The Path of the Leninist Party* (Moscow, 1974), pp. 44–45.

9. *An-Nahār* (Beirut), 6 December 1970.

10. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Kalimāt-ur-Rafīq-ul-Amīn-il-ʿĀm li-l-Ḥizb fi-l-Muʾtamar-il-Qawmī-ith-Thālith ʿAshar al-Munʿaqid fi Awākhir Tamūz 1980* (Speeches of the Comrade Secretary General of the Party at the Thirteenth National Congress Held in Late July 1980) (Damascus, 1980), p. 19.

11. Article 7 of the Baʿth party's *an-Niḍhāmu-d-Dākhilī*, p. 16; *Madrasat-ul-Ɩdād-il-Ḥizbī* (The School for Party Preparation,) *aṭ-Ṭalīʿah*, No. 6, June 1975, p. 32.

12. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Taqārīr-ul-Muʾtamir-il-Quṭrī-th-Thāmin. . . . at-Taqrīr-ut-Tandḥīmī* pp. 36–37.

13. See above, Chapter 12 and Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Kalimāt-ur-Rafīq-ul-Amīn-il-ʿĀm . . . fi Awākhir Tamūz 1980*, p. 17.

14. Population percentage based on a rough estimate by this writer; percentage of cultivated land based on figures for land use by provinces in Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1990*, p. 103.

15. Junblāṭ, *Pour le Liban*, p. 192.

16. For Jalāl as-Sayyid, see Table 11–1; for Dr. Yūsuf Zuʿayyin, see Appendix; for Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, see Table 12–1.

17. The percentages are based on figures in Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1992*, p. 61.

18. Idem, *Population Census . . . 1981, al-Qunayṭrah Province*, p. A.

19. This figure is a mid-year official estimate; see idem, *Statistical Abstract, 1992*, p. 61.

20. An estimate put the 1967 population of the Golan at 160,000 people; see the Baʿth National Command, Cultural and Party Training Bureau, *al-Quṭr-us-Sūrī-l-ʿArabī. Dirāsah ʿĀmah* (The Syrian Arab Region. A General Study), 1984, p. 22. Fewer than 10,000 remained on their farms.

21. The percentage is an approximation and based on the membership figure in Table 13–5 and 1991 data in Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1992*, pp. 315 and 317.

22. I have it on good authority that they lived in the village of Bīṭāriyyah in al-Marj. For their presence in the Ghāb since the middle of the nineteenth century, see Ḥamīdeh, *La region d'Alep*, p. 153. For their villages in the Golan, see Schumacher, *The Jaulān*, pp. 76–77 and 272–73.

23. Françoise Metral in her "State and Peasants in Syria," p. 72, gave the population of the Ghāb project area as 30,000 in 1954 and 150,000 in 1975. In the preliminary results of the 1981 census, the population of the districts forming the Ghāb region added up to 121,191; see Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Census of the Population . . . 1981, Province of Ḥamāh*, pp. 35–47.

24. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar ul-ʿĀm as-Sābiʿ*, pp. 19–20.

25. In computing these percentages, no account was taken of the agricultural "employers," and the population engaged in agriculture in 1992 was assumed to be the same as in 1991.

26. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, "Ḥawla-l-Mahām-il-Asāyyah lil-ʿAmal-il-Ḥizbi" (Concerning the Basic Tasks of Party Work), in Cultural and Party Training Bureau, *Dirāsāt Tanḍhīmiyyah, 1970–1980* (Organizational Studies, 1970–1980) (Damascus, 1983), pp. 107–9.

27. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar ul-ʿĀm as-Sābiʿ*, p. 19.

28. *Niḍāl-ul-Fallāḥīn* (Damascus), No. 1329 of 14 October 1992, p. 5.

29. Based on figures in Syria, Ministry of Planning, Directorate of Statistics, *Census of Population in 1960 in Syrian Arab Republic*, pp. 38–43; Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1992*, p. 62.

Chapter 14
Asad's Background, Education

1. See his *Asad*. Also helpful are the sketches of Asad by Karīm Paqradūnī in his *as-Salāmu-l-Mafqūd*, and in *Tishrīn* (Damascus), 12 March 1992, p. 10, and 1 December 1991, p. 8.

2. Introduction dated 5 December 1985 by Ṭlās to al-Khalīl, *Ḥāfiz al-Asad. al-Idūlūjiyyāt-uth-Thawriyyah wa-l-Fikr-us-Siyāsī*, p. 11.

3. Abū Iyād (Ṣalāḥ Khalaf), conversation with this writer, Tunis, 11 July 1985.

4. Paqradūnī, *as-Salāmū-l-Mafqūd*, p. 83.

5. Dār-ul-Baʿth, *Kalimat-us-Sayyid-ir-Raʾīs Ḥāfiz al-Asad fī-dh-Dhikra-s-Sābiʿah ʿAsharah Lithawrat-ith-Thāmin min Adhār* (The Speech

of President Ḥāfiz al-Asad on the Seventeenth Anniversary of the Revolution of March 8), 8 March 1980, p.10.

6. President Asad's speech of 10 March 1980 to the Extraordinary Congress of the Peasants' General Union, *Niḍāl-ul-Fallaḥīn*, Special Documentary Issue (Damascus, 1987), p. 17.

7. ʿAḍaymah, *Taḥlīl Rifʿat al-Asad*, p. 137.

8. Antonius Tūma ʿUbayd, conversation with this writer, 8 January 1990.

9. Guides Bleus, *Syrie, Palestine, Iraq, Transjordanie*, p. 263.

10. Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census . . . 1970*, 1:167.

11. For particulars on Asad's tribal affiliation, I am obliged to ʿAbd-il-Hādī ʿAbbās, founder of the Baʿth party branch of Maṣyāf, a member of the Baʿth Regional Command in 1958, and son of a religious shaykh from the Rashāwneh branch of the Kalbiyyah tribe; conversation, Damascus, 27 November 1992. The Junayd family provided the tribe's leaders and lived in the village of Salḥab in the Maṣyāf region. The tribe had three other branches—aj-Jurūd, al-Qarāḥilah, and an-Nawāṣirah.

12. Pronounced Tcherkas.

13. Antonius Tūma ʿUbayd, conversation with this writer, 8 January 1990.

14. Cited by Dr. Aḥmad Sulaymān al-Aḥmad, brother of the Syrian poet Badawī-j-Jabal and son of one of the most eminent ʿAlawī religious shaykhs of his day, in a statement to Tammām al-Barāzī, correspondent of *al-Waṭan-ul-ʿArabī*, April 1988. Al-Barāzī was kind enough to provide me with the text of this statement.

15. Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, Série E—Levant 1918–1940, Syrie-Liban, vol. 493. The declaration carried the signatures of eleven other ʿAlawī personages, including that of Shaykh Ṣāleḥ al-ʿAlī, leader of the 1918–1921 rebellion.

16. See letter of 11 June 1936 from Ibrahīm al-Kinj, the president of the Representative Council, to Edouard Daladier, the minister of war, and the accompanying petition of 8 June 1936, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris, Série E—Levant 1918–1940, Syrie-Liban, vol. 492.

17. Ibid., vol. 493.

18. The teller of the story, who is connected with the opposition, used the pseudonym "Rāsim al-ʿUmarī" and is merely identified as "one of the eminent Syrian Arab writers"; *Sūriyyah al-Ḥurrah* No. 6 (October 1988), pp. 6–7.

19. ʿAḍaymah, *Taḥlīl Rifʿat al-Asad*, p. 139.

20. *Al-Yūbīl-idh-Dhahabī Limadrasati Jūl Jamāl-ith-Thānawiyyah* (The Golden Jubilee of the Jūl Jamāl Secondary Public School) *1924–1974* (Latakia, 1976), pp. 15 and 18–19.

21. For Arsūzī and his role in the beginnings of the Baʿth party, see my *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, (Princeton, 1978), pp. 722–24.

22. The preceding observations are based on conversations with Zakī al-Arsūzī, 17 July 1958, Dr. Yorgī Ḥakīm, 24 April 1991, and Dr. Wahīb al-Ghānem, 3 December 1992, as well as on aj-Jundī, *al-Baʿth*, pp. 55–56; *an-Nahār* (Beirut), 13 March 1971; and the Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, the National Command, *al-Bidāyāt fī Zākirati Fāyez Ismāʿīl*, pp. 258–70. Both Dr. Ḥakīm and Fāyez Ismāʿīl are natives of the Alexandretta province and, like Dr. Wahīb al-Ghānem, disciples of Zakī al-Arsūzī. Ismāʿīl also planted the first seeds of Baʿthism in Iraq.

23. *Al-Yūbīl-idh-Dhahabī Limadrasati Jūl Jamāl*, pp. 16–17.

24. For this estimate, see Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-Bidāyāt fī Zākirati*, p. 290. For the practices of the Régie and the Baʿth campaign of 1950–1951 against the company, see ibid., pp. 239 ff.

Chapter 15
Asad's Military Career

1. For the dates relating to his commission, retirement, and various promotions, see *an-Nahār*, 13 March 1971.

2. In fact, at the 1969 Extraordinary Session of the Baʿth Party Fourth Regional Congress, the partisans of Ṣalāḥ Jadīd placed the blame in this instance entirely on Asad. See *an-Nahār*, 23 March 1969.

3. For the text of the communiqué, see Brayz, *Suqūṭ-ul-Jawlān*, p. 155.

4. Dayan, *Story of My Life*, pp. 376–77.

5. Yitzhak Rabin, *Mémoires*, pp. 96–97, and *Rabin Memoirs*, pp. 116–18.

6. Dayan, *Story of My Life*, p. 377.

7. Yitzhak Rabin, *Mémoires*, p. 97.

8. Dr. Ibrahīm Mākhūs in a conversation with this writer in Algiers, 16 March 1986.

9. Aj-Jundī, *Kisratu Khubz*, p. 17.

10. Dupuy, *Elusive Victory*, p. 324.

11. In the account by Retired Captain Khalīl Muṣṭafa (Brayz) which, he maintains, is based on conversations with other officers, these rumors appear as facts; *Suqūṭ-ul-Jawlān*, p. 106.

12. "Israel," Dayan admitted, "was taken by surprise"; *Story of My Life*, p. 612.

13. Ibid., pp. 479, 616.

14. Dupuy, *Elusive Victory*, pp. 455, 457–58.

15. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 478–79.

16. Dayan, *Story of My Life*, p. 617.

17. Asad's speech of 29 October 1973. For its text, see *al-Baʿth*, 30 October 1973, and Alexān, ed., *Madha Ḥadatha fī Tishrīn*, pp. 357–65. The quoted passage is on pp. 360–61.

18. The best accounts of the 1982 war are those of Patrick Seale, *Asad*, chapters 22 and 23; Rashīd Khālidī, *Under Siege*; Schiff and Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War*; Jansen, *The Battle of Beirut*; Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon*, chapter 18; and Randal, *Going All the Way*, chapter 7.

19. *New York Times*, 29 May 1982.

20. Akram Ḥūrānī, conversation with this writer, Paris, 15 July 1985.

Chapter 16
Aspects of Power in Asad's State

1. In a 1981 speech he called to mind this statement that he had made in the early 1970s; Arabic text of Asad's speech of 8 March 1981, p. 16, and the Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, Training Bureau, *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, 4:66.

2. *Al-Baʿth*, 10 June 1973.

3. *Kalimat-us-Sayyid-ir-Raʾīs Ḥafiz al-Asad fī-dh-Dhikra-s-Sābiʿah ʿAsharah Lithawrat-ith-Thāmin min Ādhār* (Speech of President Ḥāfiz al-Asad on the 17th Anniversary of the March 8 Revolution), 8 March 1980, pp. 9–10.

4. See, for example, Asad's speech of 8 March 1990, *Tishrīn*, 9 March 1990.

5. Asad's speech of 12 March 1992, *ath-Thawrah*, 13 March 1992.

6. For Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī, see table in Appendix.

7. Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī, *al-Waṭan-ul-ʿArabī* (Paris), 13 May 1988, and my conversation with ash-Shūfī, 27 June 1991.

8. Asprey, *Frederick the Great*, p. 230.

Chapter 17
More Subtle Forms of Power

1. Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstracts*, 1976, p. 406; *1978*, p. 335; and *1981*, p. 287. In the abstracts the figures are shown under the heading of "Value of Imports by the Private Sector" of the economy.

2. *Kalimat-us-Sayyid-ir-Raʾīs Ḥafiz al-Asad fī-dh-Dhikra-s-Sābiʿah ʿAsharah Lithawrat-ith-Thāmin min Ādhār* (Speech of President Ḥāfiz al-Asad on the 17th Anniversary of the Revolution of March 8) 8 March 1980, p. 29.

3. Consult Table 4–3.

4. His friend's name is Ṣāliḥ ʿAḍaymah. For the quoted passage, see the latter's *Taḥlīl Rifʿat al-Asad*, p. 338.

5. Ibid., pp. 106–8.

6. Ibid., p. 338.

7. In a conversation with this writer, Damascus, 19 December 1992.

8. Not a single member of the various commands had been a businessman, but a small number (for example six out of forty-eight members of the commands of 1970–1997) stemmed from families of mercantile or petty trading background. Consult Tables 12–3, 12–4, and 19–3.

9. Figures for the 1990s were obtained from the offices of the People's Assembly in December 1992. For the 1970s figures, see *Sūriyyat-uth-Thawrah fī ʿĀmihā-r-Rābiʿ ʿAshar* (Revolutionary Syria in Its Fourteenth Year) (Damascus, 1977), pp. 21–22.

10. Articles 4f, 13, and 15 of the law. For its text, see Damascus Chamber of Commerce, *Tashrīʿāt-ul-Istithmār*, pp. 17 ff.

11. According to the World Bank, the average inflation rate for the period 1985–1992 was 19.4 percent; *The World Bank, The World Bank Atlas 1994* (Washington, D.C., December 1993), p. 19.

12. For most private imports a "parallel rate" was established in 1981, which, in the middle 1980s, stood at $1 = SL 5.40 (SL = Syrian līra or pound). After 1988, when the official exchange rate was devalued from $1 = SL 3.95 to $1 = SL 11.25, "the rate prevalent

in neighboring countries" ($1 = SL 42/43 in 1991), which was not far behind the free market rate ($1 = SL 50 in the same year), was used for a considerable part of private-sector transactions.

13. *Tishrīn*, 22 June 1985, p. 4.

14. The other branches being those of the domestic, foreign, and transit trade.

15. Dr. Fahd al-Khaṭīb, assistant director of prices in the Ministry of Supply, *Tishrīn*, 29 June 1985, p. 4.

16. The main author of the report is Dr. Nabīl Sukkar. The report is entitled "Toward a Developed Socialist Economy in the Syrian Arab Region. Proposals Envisaging the Restoration of Balance to the Economy and the Establishment of a Decentralized Economic Administration" (in Arabic), Damascus, 20 November 1987). The quoted passage is from Part 1, p. 9.

17. Based on what an organ of "the National Alliance for the Liberation of Syria" (*Sūriyya-l-Ḥurrah*, No. 6 of October 1988, p. 8) maintained was a verbatim translation of the text of the report of the French News Agency.

18. Conversations in 1990, 1992, and 1994, with Syrians in and outside Syria who do not wish to be identified.

19. Statement of Idrīs ʿAbbās in the session of the People's Assembly held on 22 February 1981, *aj-Jarīdat-ur-Rasmiyyah* No. 16 of 1982, Part 2, Section 3, p. 78.

20. Dr. Rizq-ul-Lāh Haylān (Professor of Economics, Damascus University), *Bāqah Manziliyyah*, p. 28.

21. *Aj-Jarīdat-ur-Rasmiyyah*, pp. 78–79.

22. The interviewer was the British writer Patrick Seale. The text of the Arabic version of the interview was published in *al-Wasaṭ* (London), No. 67 of 10 May 1993. The quoted passage in on p. 20.

23. I have this on good authority but I am not at liberty to reveal my source.

24. For this law, see pp. 209–11.

25. For the 1991–1992 figures in this paragraph, see the *Washington Post*, 16 August 1992. By another estimate, given in the *Washington Post* of 24 January 1992, the figure for the capital held by expatriates is $75 billion. For the 1996 figure, see the statement of Syria's minister of economy and foreign trade in *al-Baʿth*, 28 March 1997, p. 11.

26. Asad speech of 18 August 1977, *aj-Jarīdat-ur-Rasmiyyah*, No. 47 of 8 December 1977, pp. 12–13.

27. Speech by Najm-ud-Dīn Ṣāliḥ, ibid., No. 49 of 21 November 1978, Part 2, p. 71.

28. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Muqarrarātu wa Tawṣiyātu, 1971–1985*, p. 36.

29. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, Regional Command, *Taqārīr-ul-Muʾtamar-il-Qutrī ath-Thāmin. At-Taqrīr-us-Siyāsī*, p. 12.

30. General Federation of Labor Unions, *Muʾtamar-ul-Ibdāʿ*, p. 23.

31. Conversation with the writer, 17 December 1992.

32. Winter-Berger, *The Washington Pay-off*, p. 47.

33. For the Harrods affair and the involvement of two British legislators and members of the cabinet of Prime Minister John Major, see the *Washington Post*, 26 October 1994.

Chapter 18
Power at the Second Tier

1. Dr. Aḥmad Sulaymān al-Aḥmad, in an interview by Tammām al-Barāzī published in *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī* (Paris), 5 August 1988. I thank al-Barāzī for providing me with the text.

2. The Arabic expression "he neither binds nor loosens" means that he has no influence whatever. Rifʿat's friend's name is Ṣāliḥ ʿAḍaymah. The quoted passage is taken from his *Taḥlīl Rifʿat al-Asad*, p. 717.

3. For the latter point, see the remarks of Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī, Syria's ambassador to the U.N., in his dialogue with Tammām al-Barāzī, *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī* (Paris), 13 May 1988.

4. Lally Weymouth, "A Rising Israeli Star," *Washington Post*, 7 March 1995.

5. Peasants' General Union, *Malāmiḥ min Tārīkh-il-Fallāḥīn*, 4:358.

6. In conversations with this writer.

7. For the respective statements, see *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabi* (Paris), 13 May 1988; *al-Iḥyāʾ-ul-ʿArabī* (Paris), 25 July 1980; *an-Nathīr* (English edition), No. 46 of 8 May 1982.

8. Dr. al-Aḥmad in a dialogue with Tammām al-Barāzī, *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī* (Paris), 5 August 1988.

9. Syria, *aj-Jarīdat-ur-Rasmiyyah* Part 2, No. 46 of 1 December 1977, pp. 64–65.

10. For the text of the decree, see ibid., p. 65.

11. Interview with Ḥūrānī by this writer, Paris, 15 July 1985.

12. See Decree No. 35 of 24 May 1973 in Syria, *aj-Jarīdat-ur-Rasmiyyah*, Part 1, No. 22 of 1973, p. 1,056.

13. *Washington Post*, 3 September and 14 October 1982.

14. I have this from an unimpeachable source.

15. *Washington Post*, 26 September 1984.

16. *Sūrriyyah al-Ḥurrah*, No. 1 of 8 March 1988, p. 3.

17. For example, ibid., No. 3 of May 1988, p. 2, claimed that the estimated annual interests on Rifʿat's deposits in Swiss and other foreign banks alone added up to $100 million.

18. Interview with Akram Ḥūrānī, Paris, 15 July 1985.

19. ʿAḍaymah, *Taḥlīl Rifʿat al-Asad*, p. 108.

20. Ibid., p. 110.

21. *Aṣ-Ṣayyād* (Beirut), 5–12 November 1970.

22. For this point I am indebted to Akram Ḥūrānī.

23. ʿAḍaymah, *Taḥlīl Rifʿat al-Asad*, pp. 691–93. The text of Rifʿat's statement is attributed by ʿAḍaymah to ʿAlī Ḥaydar, whom he identifies not by name but by the curious title of *Ḥāris* (that is, Guardian or Custodian) of the Special Forces.

24. *Washington Post*, 26 September 1984.

25. "The Documentary Text of the Confrontation of the so-called Leaders of the Front of Ḥāfiz al-Asad by the Union of Journalists and Men of Letters" (in Arabic) published in the Syrian National Democratic Opposition's Publication No. 5 of March 1985, pp. 3–17. For the quote from ʿUdwān, see p. 16.

26. I am indebted for the account in this paragraph to a knowledgeable Syrian from Damascus and to *ad-Dīmuqrāṭī*, Year 3, No. 29 (April 1984), pp. 16–17.

27. ʿAḍaymah, *Taḥlīl Rifʿat al-Asad*, pp. 657–58.

28. In Arabic "*al-Farīq,*" a military rank that Ḥāfiz al-Asad alone holds.

29. ʿAḍaymah, *Taḥlīl Rifʿat al-Asad*, pp. 688–89.

30. Ibid., p. 690.

31. Ibid., pp. 695–96.

32. Ibid., p. 698.

33. Ibid., pp. 648–49.

34. For other versions of the succession struggle, consult Seale, *Asad*, pp. 421–40; Drysdale, "The Succession Question in Syria"; and "La guerre de succession à Damas. Une nouvelle victoire pour le president Assad," by an "observer of Syrian questions" *Le Monde*, 14 August 1984.

35. The source for this particular point is *an-Nathīr*, No. 77 of 3 February 1985.

36. This commitment was first made to U.S. President Clinton on 16 January 1994 at Geneva; see the *Washington Post*, 17 January 1994.

37. For ʿAlī Ḥabīb, consult Table 18–1.

38. The data on which the analysis in this and the preceding two paragraphs is based were obtained in 1994 and 1995 from Syrians who do not wish to be identified.

39. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Bayānu-l-Qiyādat-il-Quṭriyyah*, p. 19.

40. Junblāṭ, *Pour le Liban*, p. 197.

41. Turner, *Hoover's FBI*, p. 305.

42. Correspondent of *al-Ahrām's* interview with Asad, *ash-Sharqu-l-Awsaṭ*, London, 11 October 1995.

43. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, Regional Command, *Taqārīr-ul-Muʾtamar il-Qutrī ath-Thāmin* (Damascus, 1985), p. 32.

44. Bourrienne (Napoleon's private secretary), *Memoirs of Napoleon Bonaparte*, 1:361.

45. The premiership was held by Maḥmūd al-Ayyūbī from 1972 to 1976, ʿAbd-ur-Raḥmān Khlayfāwī from 1976 to 1978, Muḥammad ʿAlī Ḥalabī from 1978 to 1980, ʿAbd-ur-Raʾūf al-Kasm from 1980 to 1987, and Maḥmūd az-Zuʿbī since 1987. Asad himself was premier in 1970–1971, and Khlayfāwī filled the post in 1971–1972.

46. For these particulars, I am indebted to ʿAbd-il-Hādī ʿAbbās, an ʿAlawite member of the 1947 founding congress of the Baʿth party and himself the son of a religious shaykh and member of the Rashawneh clan of al-Kalbiyyah tribe.

47. For these details, I am indebted to a member of the extended Dūbā family.

48. In a conversation with this writer.

49. Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī in his dialogue with Tammām al-Barāzī, *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī* (Paris), 13 May 1988.

50. Peasants' General Union, *Malāmiḥ min Tārīkh-il-Fallāḥīn*, 4:325.

51. For the particulars of the Hindāwī affair, consult Seale, *Asad*, pp. 475–82 and Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, pp. 433–37.

52. For Ibrahīm Ḥwayjah, consult Table 18–1.

53. For the Military Committee, see Chapter 12, pp. 144 ff.

54. They were ʿAlī al-Madanī from 1976 to 1979, Nazīh Zurayr from 1979 to 1984, Fūʾād al-ʿAbsī from 1984 to 1987, Mājid Saʿīd from 1987 to 1994, and Bashīr an-Najjār from 1994 to the present. For these officials consult Table 18–1.

55. For Ṣāʾib an-Naḥḥās, see above p. 231.

56. In a conversation with this writer.

Chapter 19
The Third Level of Power

1. Based on data in Appendix.

2. Consult Appendix.

3. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-Ḥarakat-ut-Taṣḥīḥiyyah*, p. 28.

4. These associates are Nāṣir-ud-Dīn Nāṣir, Aḥmad Diyāb, and Ilyās al-Lāṭī. Another supporter of Rifʿat—Yūsuf al-Asʿad—was dropped from the command in 1980 but had membership in the Central Committee from 1980 to 1985. For biographical data on these persons, consult Appendix.

Chapter 20
The Fourth Level of Power

1. I am indebted to ʿAbdallah Ḥanna for a copy of an article on "Dayr ʿAṭiyyah" that he published in a Japanese journal in 1989 and that gives an account of the history of Syria's first peasant cooperative.

2. *Niḍāl-ul-Fallāḥīn*, No. 1334, 18 November 1992, p. 4, and the Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar al-ʿĀm al-Khāmis*, p. 189.

3. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar al-ʿĀm as-Sābiʿ*, p. 67.

4. For these advantages, consult the Peasants' General Union, Executive Bureau, *Qānūn-ut-Tanḍhīm-il-Fallāhī* (The Peasants' Organization Law) *No. 21 of 1974* (Damascus, 1989), Article 92 b, d, e, and Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar ul-ʿĀm al-Khāmis*, p. 153.

5. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar ul-ʿĀm ar-Rābiʿ*, pp. 38 and 40; *al-Muʾtamar ul-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, 20; and Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1992*, p. 418.

6. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar ul-ʿĀm as-Sābiʿ*, pp. 44–45.

7. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-Thānī*, pp. 96–97.

8. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar ul-ʿĀm ar-Rābiʿ*, pp. 56–57; *al-Muʾtamar ul-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, p. 223; *al-Muʾtamar ul-ʿĀm as-Sābiʿ*, pp. 272–73. The dollar equivalent of the sums shown was calculated on the basis of the official exchange rate, which set the value of the U.S. dollar in Syria at an average of LS (Syrian pounds) 3.81 in 1966, LS 3.925 in 1976 and 1985, and LS 11.25 in 1990. In the last-mentioned year the promotional exchange rate was fixed at LS 22 per U.S. dollar, but in the free market the dollar exchanged for LS 43.

9. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar-ul-Awwal*, pp. 98–99 and 115.

10. See above, Chapter 12, p. 174.

11. I am indebted for the biographical data concerning Ḥamdūnī and al-ʿĀyed to an ex-Baʿthist who was familiar with the affairs of the peasants' organization.

12. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar ul-ʿĀm al-Khāmis*, pp. 9, 15, 18, and 19.

13. Asad's speech of 26 April 1981 at the Fifth General Congress of the Peasants' General Union, ibid., pp. 18–19; and *Niḍāl-ul-Fallāḥīn*, Special Documentary Issue, p. 14.

14. *Niḍāl-ul-Fallāḥīn*, Special Documentary Issue, pp. 66. For the more precise provisions of Decree No. 31 of 14 May 1980, see Table 2–4.

15. Peasants' General Union, *al-Muʾtamar ul-ʿĀm as-Sādis*, p. 213, and *al-Muʾtamar ul-ʿĀm as-Sābiʿ*, p. 105.

Chapter 21
Asad's Personality

1. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, pp. 1,013–14.

2. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 1,098.

3. Richard Murphy, telephone conversation with this writer, 12 May 1993.

4. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 944–45, 1,034.

5. Aleksandr Zotov, conversation with this writer, Washington, D. C., 22 November 1983.

6. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, p. 435.

7. Democratic Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-ʿAwāmilu wa-l-Asbābu-l-Asāsiyyah*; internal

evidence suggests that this report was published in 1980. The quotation is from p. 64.

8. General Amīn al-Ḥāfiz in a dialogue with the journalist Tammām al-Barāzī, *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī* (Paris), No. 66–592, 17 June 1988.

9. *Our World* (Knoxville, Tennessee), organ of the World Druze Community, 1:1 (Fall 1984), p. 11.

10. *Al-Ḥawādeth* (Beirut), 20 November 1970.

11. Sūras 2.156, 26.227.

12. For ʿUmrān, consult Table 12–1.

13. The Democratic Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-ʿAwāmilu wa-l-Asbābu-l-Asāsiyyah*, p. 65.

14. Asad to *al-Anwār* (Beirut), 12 August 1972.

15. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, National Command, *Taḥlīlu Dawri Ḥukmi-l-Yamīn-il-Mashbūh fī-l-ʿIraq wa Mawqifunā Minhu* (The Analysis of the Role of the Suspect Rightist Regime in Iraq and Our Attitude toward It), excerpts from Asad's speech to the Twelfth National Baʿth Congress, July 1975, p. 5.

16. For Nazīh Zurayr and Najī Jamīl, see Table 18–1.

17. Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī, secretary general of the Baʿth Regional Command from March 1963 to February 1964, in an interview published in *al-Waṭanū-l-ʿArabī* (Paris), 13 May 1988, p. 6.

18. The actual perpetrators of Junblāt's murder were never identified, but in the case of Bīṭār the Muslim opposition pointed the finger at Staff Colonel Nadīm ʿUmrān, the military attaché at Syria's embassy in Paris, and Lieutenant Colonel Aḥmad ʿAbbūd, who was said to be a relative of ʿAlī Dūbā, the chief of military intelligence; *an-Nathīr*, No. 23, 28 September 1980, p. 22. But it is likely that this is more in the nature of a speculation than a conclusion drawn from solid fact.

Chapter 22
The Muslim Brethren

1. *An-Nahār* (Beirut), 24 February 1972.

2. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Al-Ḥarakat-ut-Taṣḥīhiyyah, Waqāiʿu wa Arqām* (The Corrective Movement, Facts and Figures) (1973), 4:50.

3. Syria, Ministry of Information, *Sūriyyat-uth-Thawrah fī ʿĀmiha-th-Thānī ʿAshar* (The Syria of the Revolution in Its Twelfth Year), (1975), pp. 328–29.

4. Syria, Ministry of Information, *Sūriyyat-uth-Thawrah fī ʿĀmiha-th-Thālith ʿAshar* (The Syria of the Revolution in Its Thirteenth Year) (1976), pp. 239 and 242; and *aj-Jarīdat-ur-Rasmiyyah* Part 1, No. 11 of 1980, pp. 466–67.

5. Syria, The Political Department of the General Command of the Armed Forces, *Majmūʿatu Khuṭabī-r-Raʾīs al-Qāʾid Ḥafiz al-Asad* (Collection of the Speeches of the President and Leader Ḥafiz al-Asad), vol. 19 (1989), p. 61.

6. Articles 3 and 35 of the draft constitution.

7. *Ath-Thawrah*, 21 February 1973.

8. The ʿUlamāʾ and Men of Religion, *al-ʿAlawiyyūn*, pp. 16–21 and 27.

9. Preface by Muftī Qabalān, ibid., p. 4.

10. That is, the sciences relating to the Sharīʿah or canon law of Islam.

11. Literally, the Noble Association.

12. Bureau of Syrian and Arab Studies, *Man Huwa fī Sūriyyah* (Who's Who in Syria) (Damascus, 1951), pp. 646–47.

13. *Tishrīn*, 27 November 1991, p. 10.

14. ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn in a dialogue with *al-Yawmu-s-Sābiʿ* (Paris) published in its issue of 5 March 1990.

15. For the origins, ideas, leadership, social composition, and policies of the Muslim Brotherhood, see my "Syria's Muslim Brethren."

16. This is based on an account published by the Baʿth Training Bureau in its *al-Ikhwānu-l-Muslimūn*, 3:40. The account apparently rests on statements drawn out from captured members of the Brotherhood.

17. *An-Nathīr*, 1 August 1984, p. 20.

18. ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn, the superintendent general of Syria's Brotherhood from 1975 to 1980, conversation with this writer, New York, 1 January 1982.

19. Quṭb, *Maʿālimu fī-t-Ṭarīq*, pp. 3 and 59–61. The first edition of this book was published in Cairo in 1964.

20. I am indebted for this detail to ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn; conversation 1 January 1982.

21. Muslim Brethren, Information Bureau, *Ḥamāh. Maʾsāt-ul-Aṣr*, p. 17, and *an-Nathīr*, 1 August 1984, p. 23.

22. My source for this is an Arab journalist familiar with the history of the Brotherhood,

who did not wish to be identified; conversation, 29 December 1981.

23. Baʿth Party Training Bureau, *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, 3:41.

24. Iṣam al-ʿAṭṭār in an interview given to *an-Nahār Arab Report & Memo* published in its issue of 18 February 1980, pp. 4–5.

25. ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn, conversation 1 January 1982.

26. Al-ʿAzm, *Muthakkirāt* 3:285; and *al-Ḥayātu-j-Jadīdah* (organ of Syria's League of Communist Action), November-December 1980, p. 148.

27. ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn, conversation 1 January 1982.

28. This quotation is taken from the *New York Times*, 29 November 1975.

29. The official wholesale price index rose from 100 in the base year 1962 to 226 in 1975 and 350 in 1979 for cereals and flour and, in the same years, to 294 and 509 for vegetables and to 328 and 483 for meat; Syria, Office of the Prime Minister, Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract, 1980*, p. 340.

30. Baʿth Party, Training Bureau, *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, 3:41 and 43; *an-Nathīr*, 1 August 1984, pp. 23–24; Muslim Brethren, Information Bureau, *Ḥamāh*, p. 17; *al-Ḥayātu-j-Jadīdah*, November-December 1980, p. 153; and Committee for Defending Political Detainees in Syria, *Al-Iʿtiqālāt-us-Siyāsiyyah fī Sūriyyah ʿala Ḍawʾ Mabdaʾ Siyādat-il-Qānūn* (Political Detentions in Syria in the Light of the Principle of the Rule of Law), a study presented to the Arab Lawyers' Congress held in Tunis on 15 November 1976, p. 63.

31. Baʿth Party Training Bureau, *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, 3:42.

32. Ibid., 4:162–63. For the biographical particulars of the chief figures involved in the incident I am indebted to ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn of the Muslim Brotherhood.

33. I found a copy of this statement in a file at the office of the P.L.O. chairman in Tunis relating to the P.L.O.'s relations with the Syrian regime.

34. ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn, conversation with this writer, New York, 1 January 1982.

35. Baʿth Party Training Bureau, *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, 3:44–47.

36. He was interrogated by representatives of the General Intelligence on 15 March 1979 and condemned to death in June; ibid., 4:270–72 and 311.

37. Nabīl al-Kawākibī, a native of Aleppo and a descendant of the eminent Muslim revivalist ʿAbd-ur-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī (1848–1902).

38. Baʿth Party Training Bureau, *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, 3:50–51.

39. Ibid., 3:61–63. For the biographical particulars of the members of the Joint Command, I am indebted to ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn of the Muslim Brotherhood.

40. The General Secretariat of the Islamic Front, *Mīthāqu-j-Jabhat-il-Islāmiyyah fī Sūriyyah* (The Charter of the Islamic Front in Syria), (n.p., 1981), pp. 11–12.

41. Ibid., pp. 25–26.

42. Baʿth Party Training Bureau, *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, 3:64.

43. See Chapter 18.

44. Baʿth Party Training Bureau, *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, 3:64–65.

45. On this the government and the Muslim Brotherhood concur; see ibid., 3:66 and the dialogue of ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn of the Brotherhood with Tammām al-Barāzī published in *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī* (Paris), No. 64–590, 3 June 1988. I am indebted to al-Barāzī for the text of Saʿd-ud-Dīn's statements.

46. Based on a piecing together of data in Saʿd-ud-Dīn's statement to *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī* cited in the preceding note and in accounts by the Baʿth Party Training Bureau in *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, 2:116 and by a group of "researchers" in the Information Bureau of the Muslim Brethren in *Ḥamāh*, p. 51.

47. *An-Nathīr*, No. 47 Year 3, 14 June 1982, p. 32.

48. ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn in his dialogue with Tammām al-Barāzī, *al-Waṭānu-l-ʿArabī*, No. 64–590, 3 June 1988.

49. Based on figures provided by the Committee for the Defense of Freedom and Political Prisoners in Syria in its organ *al-Minbar* (Geneva), No. 3 of January 1981, pp. i-xl, and No. 4 of May 1981, annex after p. 95. In the numbers or percentages given in the text, no account was taken of the prisoners arrested prior to 1976 or those whose occupation was not provided.

50. ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn, conversation with this writer, New York, 1 January 1982.

51. Asad's speech of 22 December 1979 to the Seventh Regional Congress of the Baʿth party, *al-Munāḍil*, No. 129 of January 1980, pp. 50–51 and 57.

52. Excerpts from the speeches made at the meeting of the Union of Writers and Journalists were published in *al-Ḥawādeth* (Beirut), 7 December 1979.

53. Apart from the premier, the Damascene members of the cabinet who descended from such families were Khālid al-Mālkī, minister of justice; Dr. Nawras ad-Daqar, minister of housing and utilities; Dr. Najāḥ al-ʿAṭṭār, minister of culture and national guidance, and Muḥammad Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb, minister of religious trusts; *aj-Jarīdat-ur-Rasmiyyah*, Part 1, No. 4 of 1980, pp. 149–50 and *as-Safīr* (Beirut), 15 and 16 January 1980.

54. For other biographical details on al-Kasm, see Appendix.

55. Al-Ḥusnī (1874–1940), *Kitābu Muntakhabāt-it-Tawārīkh Lidimashq* Part 2, p. 887.

56. *As-Safīr* (Beirut), 12 March 1980; Baʿth Party Printing Press, *Al-Khiṭābu-t-Tārīkhī Lir-Raʾīs-il-Qāʾid fi-dh-Dhikra-th-Thāminah ʿAsharah Lithawrati Ādhār* (The Historical Speech of the President . . . on the 18th Anniversary of the March Revolution), March 1981, p. 52; and *Majmūʿat-il-Aḥādīth al-latī Adla biha Ar-Rafiq Ḥāfiz al Asad . . .* (Collection of Speeches made by President Ḥāfiz al-Asad . . .) in February and March 1982, pp. 30 and 37.

57. Arab Socialist Baʿth Party, National Command, *Kalimāt-ur-Rafīq-il-Amīn-il-ʿĀm lil-Ḥizb fi-l-Muʾtamar-il-Qawmī-th-Thālith ʿAshar* (The Words of the Comrade Secretary General of the Party to the Thirteenth National Congress Held in Damascus in Late July 1980), "Earmarked for active members," Damascus, September 1980, pp. 68–69.

58. Ibid., pp. 29–30.

59. Baʿth Publishing House, *Kalimat-us-Sayyid-ir-Raʾīs Ḥafiz al-Asad fī-dh-Dhikra-s-Sābiʿah ʿAsharah Lithawrat-ith-Thāmin min Ādhār* (Speech of President Asad on the Seventeenth Anniversary of the Revolution of March 8th) March 8, 1980, p. 26.

60. Article 1 of the Law, Syrian Arab Republic, *aj-Jarīdah ar-Rasmiyyah*, Part 1, No. 29 of 1980, pp. 1,450–1,451.

61. *Tishrīn* (Damascus), 29 August 1980 and *as-Safīr* (Beirut), 30 August 1980.

62. ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn, the Brotherhood's deputy superintendent general, conversation, January 1982.

63. Baʿth Party Training Bureau, *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, 3:65.

64. Ibid., 4:45.

65. *New York Times*, 25 February 1982.

66. Muslim Brethren, Information Bureau, *Ḥamāh*, pp. 21–24.

67. Ibid., pp. 135–36.

68. *Report from Amnesty International to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic*, p. 37.

69. Akram Ḥurānī, conversation with this writer, Paris, 15 July 1985; and "The Syrian Democrats," *Majzarat Ḥamāh*, pp. 9 and 85.

70. Muslim Brethren, Information Bureau, *Ḥamāh*, p. 136.

71. Syrian National Democratic Opposition, *Ḥamāh min Bidāyat-il-Qarn-il-ʿIshrīn ila-l-Madhbaḥah* (Ḥamāh from the Beginning of the Twentieth Century until the Massacre), n.p., February 1985, p. 35.

72. Will and Ariel Durant, *The Age of Napoleon* (The Story of Civilization, Part 11) (New York, 1975), p. 251.

73. *An-Nathīr*, No. 47, 14 June 1982, p. 32.

74. I have this on good authority but my source prefers to remain anonymous.

75. This view was expressed by Tammām al-Barāzī, a correspondent of *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī*, and earlier by Ḥamūd ash-Shūfī, secretary general of the Syrian Baʿth Party Regional Command in 1963–1964, in *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī*, No. 63–589 of 27 May 1988 and No. 61–587 of 13 May 1988, respectively.

76. Uns ʿAbdullah, a Syrian engineer living in Saudi Arabia and a supporter of ʿUqlah, in a letter to *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī*.

77. For the involvement of Dūbā in the 1984 contacts with the leaders of the Brotherhood, see Kutschera, "L'eclipse des Frères Musulmans Syriens," and statements by ʿAdnān Saʿd-ud-Dīn (a leader of the Brotherhood) in *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī*, No. 64–590, 3 June 1988.

78. Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), *Daily Report. Middle East and Africa*, 28 January 1985, pp. H9 and H10.

79. Saʿd-ud-Dīn to the correspondent of *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī* in this journal's issue No. 63–589 of 27 May 1988 and No. 64–590 of 3 June 1988.

80. Statement by the leadership of this faction in *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī*, No. 84–610, 21 October 1988, pp. 28–29.

81. Saʿd-ud-Dīn in an account of the talks in *al-Watanū-l-ʿArabī*, No. 64–590, 3 June 1988. General Gourand was a high commissioner in Syria under the French Mandate.

82. This remark by al-ʿAṭṭār was reported by Tammām al-Barāzī in *al-Waṭanu-l-ʿArabī*, No. 61–587 of 13 May 1988.

83. For the charter of the alliance, see *al-Minbar*, No. 8, September 1982, pp. 74–80.

84. *Al-Yawm-us-Sābiʿ* (Paris), 5 March 1990.

85. Interview with Asad by Patrick Seale, *al-Wasaṭ* (London), No. 67, 10 May 1993, pp. 17–18.

86. See pp. 209 ff.

87. *Al-Yawm-us-Sābiʿ* (Paris), 5 March 1990, and FBIS, *Daily Report, Middle East and Africa*, 9 March 1990 and 30 March 1995. The offences no longer subject to martial law regulations apparently included, among others, those against "public authority" or constituting "a general danger," or opposing "any of the aims of the revolution" or involving monopoly in the trade of foodstuffs. For details concerning emergency regulations, consult *Report from Amnesty International to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic*, 1983, pp. 6–11.

88. *Washington Post*, 7 December 1991 and 22 July 1992; *Financial Times*, 15 December 1995; and *Middle East Journal* 50.2 (Spring 1996): 264.

89. Consult Perthes, "Syria's Parliamentary Elections."

90. Ministry of Information, *Sūriyyat-uth-Thawrah fī ʿĀmiha-r-Rābiʿ ʿAshar* (Damascus, 1977), p. 21.

91. *Ath-Thawrah* (Damascus), 12 February 1986. In the 1990 elections they took 84 out of the 250 seats; FBIS, *Daily Report, Middle East and Africa*, 29 May 1990. In 1994 they took 83 out of the 250 seats, ibid., 29 August 1994.

Chapter 23
Regional Politics

1. Interview with President al-Asad by *Time* magazine as reported by Damascus Domestic Service, Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), NES–89–058, 28 March 1989, pp. 41–42.

2. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-Ḥarakatu-t-Taṣḥīḥiyyah 1970–1980*, p. 16.

3. Baʿth Publishing House, *Kalimat-us-Sayyid-ir-Raʾīs Ḥāfiz al-Asad . . . March 8, 1980*, p. 30.

4. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Al-Khiṭābu-l-Qawmī-ish-Shāmil-lir-Rafīq-il-Munāḍil Ḥāfiz al-Asad* (The Comprehensive National Speech of the Struggling Comrade Ḥāfiz al-Asad) 8 March 1989, pp. 24–25.

5. See above, Chapter 14.

6. For the Military Committee, see Chapter 12.

7. See Munīf ar-Razzāz (secretary general of the Baʿth party from 1965 to 1966), *at-Tajribah al-Murrah*, pp. 86–87.

8. ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir revealed during the 1963 Tripartite Union negotiations that the Baʿthists had proposed in 1959 the formation of a secret committee to run the United Arab Republic consisting of six members, three from the Baʿth party and the others from Egypt, but that he had rejected the proposal on the ground that "the Baʿth party is not Syria," *al-Ahrām* Institution, *Maḥāḍiru Muḥādathāt-il-Waḥdah*, p. 73.

9. I am assuming, as is suggested by the context, that Patrick Seale's statement (in his *Asad*, p. 64) to the effect that the Committee's "priority was to defend the union which in 1960–61 seemed truly threatened," is based on his 1984–1985 interviews with Asad.

10. Aj-Jundī, *al-Baʿth*, p. 86.

11. Consult *al-Ahrām* Institution, *Maḥāḍiru Muḥādathāt-il-Waḥdah* and ar-Razzāz, *at-Tajribah al-Murrah*, p. 97.

12. Ar-Razzāz, *at-Tajribah al-Murrah*, pp. 97–98.

13. *Al-Ahrām* Institution, *Maḥāḍiru*, p. 27.

14. This was disclosed at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Arab Socialist Union, held in Cairo on 25 April 1971, by ʿAlī Sabrī, its secretary general and a former prime minister of Egypt. For the pertinent proceedings, see Fūʾād Maṭar, *Ayna Asbaḥa ʿAbd-un-Nāṣir*, pp. 27 ff. For the quoted statement, see pp. 30–31.

15. See Article 8a of the Basic Rules of the Federation of Arab Republics adopted on 17 April 1971. For the text of these rules, see ibid., pp. 89–91.

16. See the Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-Ḥarakatu-t-Taṣḥīḥyyah*, pp. 222–23 and 247–48.

17. See ibid., p. 261 and Internal Party Bulletin No. 39/Q12 of 21 June 1979.

18. *Middle East Economic Digest*, 3 November 1978, pp. 7–8, and 15 December 1978, pp. 12–14; and *Middle East*, February 1980, p. 15.

19. *Middle East Economic Digest*, 15 December 1978, p. 14.

20. Maṭar, *Ṣaddām Ḥusayn*, pp. 73–74; *Middle East Economic Digest*, 2 February 1979, p. 42; and *Middle East*, February 1980, pp. 14–15.

21. Fatḥ, Intelligence and Information Apparatus, Memorandum No. WS 32/72986 of 26 June 1979. I am indebted to the P.L.O. for permitting me to peruse in 1985 in Tunis the organization's records pertaining to its relations with the Syrian government.

22. The Shīʿī Deputy Prime Minister ʿAdnān Ḥusayn, the Sunnī Education Minister Muḥammad Maḥjūb, and Muḥammad ʿĀyesh and Ghānim ʿAbd-ul-Jalīl, who are identified in the text.

23. Maṭar, *Ṣaddām Ḥusayn*, pp. 58–68. Details relating to the identity of the persons involved were obtained in 1980 from Iraqis who did not wish to be named. For contemporary accounts of the "conspiracy," see the *New York Times* of 28, 29, and 30 July and of 7, 8, and 9 August 1979.

24. Internal Syrian Baʿth Party Circular No. 40/Q12 of 29 August 1979 in *al-Ḥarakatu-t-Taṣḥīḥiyyah*, pp. 262–64.

25. Up to August 1979 Iraq's aid to Syria added up to $183.2 million. Syria received another installment of $91.6 million in January 1980 and an unspecified amount in the following May; Maṭar, *Ṣaddām Ḥusayn*, pp. 74 and 83.

26. Baʿth National Command, Printed Circular No. 59 of Early December 1980 entitled *Naṣṣu-l-Muqābalati-il-Hāmmah maʾir-Rafīq-il-Amīn-il-ʿĀm* (Text of the Important Interview with the Comrade Secretary General) by the Kuwaiti paper *ar-Raʾyu-l-ʿĀm*, pp. 6 and 10.

27. ʿAzīz, *Aṣ-Ṣirāʿ-ul-ʿIraqī-l-Irānī*, p. 68.

28. Savak was the Shah's secret police.

29. However, in 1982 Syria closed its pipeline again.

30. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, National Command, *Taqrīr ʿan-il-ʿIlāqāt-is-Sūriyyat-il Irāniyyah* (Report on Syrian-Iranian Relations) marked "Private and Extremely Secret" and dated 18 March 1981. I found the report in one of the files of the Office of the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization relating to the organization's relations with the Syrian regime.

31. See, for example, Asad's speech of 8 March 1989, FBIS–NES–89–045, 9 March 1989, pp. 36–37.

32. For the effects of the Gulf War and its implications, see Asad's speech of 12 March 1992, *ath-Thawrah*, 13 March 1992. For his concepts of "strategic parity" with Israel and "self-reliance" and the underlying causal circumstances, see Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, Regional Command, *Taqārīr-ul-Muʾtamar il-Quṭrī-th-Thāmin . . . at-Taqrīr-us-Siyasī*, pp. 29–30; and Defence Minister Muṣṭafa Tlās, *At-Tawāzunu-l-Istrātījī . . . Masʾūliyyah Qawmiyyah* (Strategic Parity . . . A Nationalist Responsibility), *al-Munāḍil*, Nos. 189–90, October-November 1985, pp. 28–34. For an informative American account of U.S.-Syrian relations, see Talcott W. Seelye (former American Ambassador to Syria), *U.S. Arab Relations*.

Chapter 24
Fatḥ and the P.L.O.

1. Palestine National Liberation Movement, *Fatḥ* (n.p., 1969), p. 7.

2. Iyād, *My Home, My Land*, p. 29.

3. Abū-l-Luṭf (Fārūq Qaddūmī), conversation with this writer, Tunis, 11 July 1985. According to Abū-l-Luṭf, the first organizers of Fatḥ were Yāser ʿArafāt, Abū Jihād (Khalīl al-Wazīr), ʿĀdel ʿAbd-ul-Karīm, ʿAbdullah Dannān, Muḥammad Yūsuf an-Najjār, and Abū-l-Luṭf. Abū Iyād (Salāḥ Khalaf), Abū Māzin (Maḥmūd ʿAbbās), and Abū Saʿīd (Khālid al-Ḥasan) joined the Fatḥ Command in 1962, Abū-l-Luṭf added.

4. Hart, *Arafat*, p. 138. The source for Hart's version appears to be Khālid al-Ḥasan, who in a 1982 conversation with Helena Cobban (*The Palestinian Liberation Organization*, p. 23) gave 1962 as the date of the founding of Fatḥ.

5. Conversation, Tunis, 11 July 1985.

6. Abū Yaḥya (director of the P.L.O.'s Political Department), conversation, Tunis, 8 July 1985.

7. Abū Iyād, conversation, Tunis, 11 July 1985.

8. Ibid.

9. I am indebted to Yazīd Ṣāyegh for providing me with particulars relating to the presumed killer; conversation, 15 November 1992.

10. For this version of the affair which is based on accounts by ʿArafāt, Abū Jihād, Umm Jihād, and Khālid al-Ḥasan, see Hart, *Arafat*, pp. 201 ff.

11. Abū-l-Luṭf and Yūsuf an-Najjār.

12. Abū Iyād, conversation, Tunis, 11 July 1985.

13. Literally "Father of Sulaymān." Asad, as far as I know, had no son by that name. Its bearer was his grandfather.

14. The letter was sent to Asad after he permitted the holding in Syria of Fatḥ's Fourth Congress, and is in one of the files of the office of the P.L.O. chairman.

15. Conversation, 11 July 1985.

16. Consult Hersh, *The Price of Power*, pp. 234 ff., and Hart, *Arafat*, pp. 312 ff.

17. *Newsweek*, 5 October 1970, quoted in Palestine Liberation Organization, Research Center, Beirut, *Black September*, August 1971, p. 95.

18. *Newsweek*, 5 October 1970, quoted ibid., p. 61.

19. Rol Sholder of the Nordic Branch of the Fund, Reuters, 22 October 1970, quoted ibid., p. 138.

20. Ibid., p. 142.

21. See Seale, *Asad*, pp. 158–59.

22. Democratic Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-ʿAwāmilu*, p. 51.

23. Abū Iyād, conversation, Tunis, 11 July 1985.

24. Hersh, *The Price of Power*, p. 247.

25. Conversation, 11 July 1985.

26. Abū Iyād, conversation, 11 July 1985.

27. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Taqārīru wa Muqarrātu-l-Muʾtamiri-l-Quṭrī-l-Khāmis*, 8–14 May 1971, p. 56.

28. Asad used the Syrian dialectal word *yaqtarib*, which literally means to draw close to with the intent of harming.

29. Interview with Abū Iyād, 11 July 1985.

30. For the Arabic text of the accord, see Camille Shamʿūn, *Azamah fī Lubnān*, pp. 145–47. For an English translation, see Walīd Khālidī, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*, pp. 185–87.

31. Senator Fulbright, then the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, referred to this threat in a speech he made in the U.S. Senate in August 1974; see Sheehan, *The Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger*, pp. 145–46 note.

32. Asad's speech of 20 July 1976 in Syria, Political Directorate of the General Command of the Army and Armed Forces, *Majmūʿatu Khuṭabī . . . Ḥāfiz al-Asad*, vol. 6 (1976), p. 140.

33. Syrian National Democratic Opposition, *al-Masʾalat-ul-Lubnāniyyah Bayna ʿAhdayn Sūriyyayn* (n.p., October 1984), pp. 12–13.

34. Interview with Abū Iyād, 11 July 1985.

35. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-Ḥarakāt-ut-Taṣḥīḥiyyah*, pp. 155 and 157.

36. Hart, *Arafat*, pp. 364–65.

37. The Arab summit held in Rabāt in October 1974 voted to grant the confrontation Arab states a total of $1.369 billion, of which 3 percent and 42 percent were allotted to the P.L.O. and Syria, respectively; Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-Ḥarakāt-ut-Taṣḥīḥiyyah*, p. 162.

38. Ibid., p. 161.

39. U.N. Resolutions 3,236 and 3,237 of 1974 have reference.

40. According to Abū Iyād, documentary evidence later provided by defectors from the Lebanese Deuxième Bureau indicated that the massacre was planned beforehand, and that agents of the Bureau and Maronite militants from Camille Shamʿūn's National Liberal Party carried it out; Abū Iyād, *My Home, My Land*, p. 164.

41. Interview with Abū Iyād, 11 July 1985.

42. Abū Iyād, *My Home, My Land*, p. 180.

43. Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon*, p. 185.

44. Junblāṭ, *Pour le Liban*, p. 154.

45. Ibid., pp. 38, 42.

46. For details concerning these reforms, consult Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon*, pp. 52–53.

47. Rouleau, "La Syrie dans le bourbier libanais."

48. Asad's speech of 20 July 1976, Syria, the Political Directorate of the General Command of the Army and Armed Forces, *Majmūʿatu Khuṭabī al-Farīqī-l-Qāʾid Ḥāfiz al-Asad*, 6:148–52.

49. Ibid., p. 114.

50. Shamʿūn, *Azamah fī Lubnān*, p. 40.

51. Ibid., p. 19.

52. Petran, *The Struggle over Lebanon*, p. 187.

53. Asad's speech of 20 July 1976, Syria, *Majmūʿatu Khuṭabī*, 6:117, 118.

54. Petran, *The Strugle over Lebanon*, p. 187.

55. Shamʿūn, *Azamah fī Lubnān*, pp. 16 and 19.

56. Ibid., pp. 34, 41; Junblāṭ, *Pour le Liban*, p. 25.

57. The preceding paragraph is based on ac-

counts by Abū Iyād, conversation, 11 July 1985; Shamʿūn, *Azamah fī Lubnān*, pp. 30, 43, 58–61, and 63–72; and *New York Times*, 19 and 20 April 1976; and on Asad's speech of 20 July 1976, in Syria, *Majmūʿatu Khuṭabī* 6:128.

58. Junblāṭ, *Pour le Liban*, pp. 44 and 48–49.

59. This account of the meeting is based on Junblāṭ's version, ibid., pp. 184–85, and the version Asad gave later to the Lebanese President Ilyās Sarkīs as reported in Paqrādūnī, *as-Salāmu-l-Mafqūd*, p. 36.

60. Interview with Abū Iyād, 11 July 1985.

61. Asad's speech of 20 July 1976 in Syria, *Majmūʿatu Khuṭabī*, 6:133.

62. Ibid., pp. 152–53.

63. Quoted in Paqrādūnī, *as-Salāmu-l-Mafqūd*, p. 84.

64. Seelye, *U.S.-Arab Relations*, p. 5.

65. Richard Murphy, telephone conversation, 12 May 1993.

66. Junblāṭ, *Pour le Liban*, p. 37. This penchant would later give rise within the U.S. State Department to the enduring coinage, "play H.A.K."; see the *Washington Post*, 20 February 1993.

67. Abū Iyād, *My Home, My Land*, p. 188.

68. Consult his *Asad*, pp. 278–80.

69. The text of the telegram is in a file of the P.L.O. chairman at Tunis relating to the organization's relations with the Syrian regime.

70. Interview with Abū Iyād, Tunis, 11 July 1985.

71. The Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *al-Ḥarakat-ut-Taṣḥīḥiyyah*, pp. 230–31.

72. ʿArafāt in a conversation with Egyptian college professors and academic researchers, *Fikr* (Paris), Year 2, No. 6 (June 1985): 15.

73. *Al-Munāḍil*, *al-Muʾtamar al-Quṭrī as-Sābiʿ*, Special Issue No. 129 (January 1980):59–60.

74. Sayigh, "Palestinian Military Performance in the 1982 War," p. 9.

75. ʿArafāt in *Fikr* (Paris), June 1985, p. 14; Schiff and Yaʿari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, p. 87.

76. Abū Iyād interview, Tunis, 11 July 1985.

77. ʿArafāt in *Fikr* (Paris), June 1985, p. 15.

78. This was conveyed to ʿArafāt by Muḥammad Sharīf Musāʿidiyyah, the envoy whom Algeria's President Shazlī ben Jadīd sent to Damascus; ʿArafāt in *Fikr* (Paris), June 1985, p. 19.

79. This is an estimate by the Associated Press cited by Jansen, *The Battle of Beirut*, p. 4. Israeli censorship has not to this day permitted any reporting of the actual size of the invading force.

80. Interview, Tunis, 11 July 1985.

81. ʿArafāt in *Fikr* (Paris), June 1985, p. 20.

82. Abū Iyād, conversation, 11 July 1985.

83. A copy of the letter is in a file of the P.L.O. chairman at Tunis containing papers on the organization's relations with the Syrian regime.

84. *Il-al-Amām* (organ of the P.F.L.P.—General Command), 1 September 1984, pp. 44 ff.

85. For Abū Niḍāl, consult Seale, *Abū Niḍāl*.

86. Report No. Q/80/10740 of 18 September 1980 in P.L.O. chairman's file relating to the organization's relations with the Syrian regime. At that time Damascus apparently suspected that Abū Ṭaʿān had an indirect hand in the outbreak of violence in Tripoli in August 1980.

87. Aḥmad Jibrīl, in *Il-al-Amām*, 1 September 1984, p. 50.

88. Interview with Abū-l-Luṭf (Farūq Qaddūmī), Tunis, 11 July 1985.

89. Letter of 9 August 1982 to P.L.O. Chairman from Abū Māher (Muḥammad Rātib Ghunaym), Damascus, in P.L.O. chairman's file.

90. *An-Nahār* (Beirut), 1 June 1983.

91. *Washington Post*, 24 June 1983.

92. Except where otherwise indicated, the observations in this and the preceding three paragraphs are based on interviews in Tunis between 6 and 11 July 1985 with Abū Iyād, Abū-l-Luṭf, Khalid al-Ḥasan, and Abū Yaḥya; on a conversation with Yazīd Ṣāyegh, 16 May 1993; and on accounts in the *Washington Post*, 20 and 23 May and 22 to 29 June 1983.

93. *Washington Post*, 12 July 1983.

94. Syrian Arab Republic, General Command of the Army and the Armed Forces, Political Directorate, *an-Nashrat-us-Siyāsiyat-ul-Usbūʿiyyah* (the weekly Political Bulletin), No. 31 of 2 August 1983, p. 3. I found a copy of the bulletin in the P.L.O. chairman's file already cited.

95. Abū Iyād, conversation, Tunis, 11 July 1985.

96. The observations in this and the preceding paragraph are based on interviews with the Fatḥ leaders named in note 92 and on accounts in the *Washington Post*, 6–20 November, and 20 and 23 December 1983.

97. *Washington Post*, 6 November 1983.

98. This was revealed by al-Aḥmad himself. See his statement in *al-Waṭan-ul-ʿArabī* (Paris), 5 August 1988.

99. This was disclosed by "high-ranking sources in Jerusalem" whom *Time* (2 January 1984, p. 66) cited.

100. *Washington Post*, 25 June 1983.

101. The observations in this and the preceding paragraph are based on the interview with Abū Iyād; on accounts in the *Washington Post*, 23, 24, and 26 December 1983, and 6 January 1984; and on the text of the accord of 22 June 1984, which was published in an appendix to the political report of the Eighth Regional Baʿth Congress. See the Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Taqārīr-ul-Muʾtamar-il-Quṭrī-th-Thāmin . . . at-Taqrīr-us-Siyāsī*, pp. 133–41.

102. Ibid., p. 85.

103. ʿArafāt in *Fikr* (Paris), June 1985, p. 59.

104. Ibid., p. 60.

105. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Taqārīr-ul-Muʾtamar-il-Quṭrī-th-Thāmin . . . at-Taqrīr-us-Siyāsī*, p. 86.

106. Interview with Abū Iyād, 11 July 1985.

107. For the negotiations between ʿArafāt and King Ḥusayn and their outcome, see ʿArafāt in *Fikr* (Paris), June 1985, pp. 52–56.

108. Ibid., p. 44.

109. See Milton Viorst, " ʿArafāt's Show of Strength," *Washington Post*, 30 April 1987.

110. Meron Benvenisti (former Israeli deputy mayor of Jerusalem), *The West Bank Data Project*, p. 19.

111. *Washington Post*, 16 March 1984, p. A16 and 20 March 1984, p. B2.

112. The phrase "death trap" is that of the Israeli journalists Zeʿev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari; see their *Israel's Lebanon War*, p. 308.

113. ʿArafāt in *Fikr* (Paris), June 1985, p. 21.

114. The memorandum is in a P.L.O. file on the organization's relations with the Syrian regime.

115. The report came from Middle East peace conference sources in Geneva; see the *New York Times*, 3 June 1974.

116. *Washington Post*, 11 February 1987.

117. Statement by Akram al-Ḥūrānī, a leader of the Syrian National Democratic Opposition, the Opposition's Bulletin No. 7 June 1985, pp. 1–2.

118. *Washington Post*, 28 November 1986.

119. For information on the attitude of the last-named factions, I am indebted to Yazīd Ṣāyegh (conversation, 16 May 1993). The remaining data in this paragraph are drawn from the statement by Akram al-Ḥūrānī in Bulletin of the Syrian National Democratic Opposition No. 7, p. 2.

120. This was first revealed by Israeli military intelligence sources; see the *Washington Post*, 7 January 1987.

121. Interview with Abū Iyād by *aṣ-Ṣada* (Tunis), 7 July 1985, p. 13.

122. Asad was asked about this alliance by an American correspondent but evaded the question; Al-Baʿth Publishing House, interview with President Ḥāfiz al-Asad by the *Washington Post* and the *Herald Tribune* (in Arabic), 18 May 1986, pp. 26–27.

123. The observations in the preceding paragraphs are based partly on interviews in Tunis between 6 and 11 July 1985 with Abū Iyād, Abū-l-Luṭf, Khālid al-Ḥasan, and Abū Yaḥya, and partly on accounts in the *Washington Post*, 17 and 18 January and 23 December 1986, 15 February and 22 May 1987, and 21 January 1988.

124. For an English translation of the text of the communiqué, see Lockman and Beinin, eds., *Intifāḍa*, pp. 328–29.

125. *Washington Post*, 21 March 1989.

126. Ḥamās, *Mīthāqu Ḥarakat-il-Muqāwamat-il-Islāmiyyah (ḤAMĀS), Filastīn*, Articles 6 (p. 6) and 11 (p. 9). In its covenant (Article 27, p. 22), ḤAMĀS described the P.L.O. as "the closest of the close to the Islamic Resistance Movement for to it belongs the father or the brother or the relative or the friend . . . and we share the same homeland, the same affliction, the same fate, and a common enemy."

127. *Washington Post*, 8 and 11 July 1988.

128. *Washington Post*, 27 November and 15 December 1989.

129. Arab Baʿth Socialist Party, *Taqārīr-ul-Muʾtamar-il-Quṭrī-th-Thāmin wa Muqarrātuhu . . . at-Taqrīr-us-Siyāsī*, pp. 104–7.

130. For an English translation of ʿArafāt's speech, see FBIS, *Daily Report. Near East and South Asia*, 14 December 1988, pp. 3–10.

131. Interview with Asad by *Time* magazine on 25 March 1989; *Time*, 28 March 1989, pp. 40–41.

132. FBIS, *Daily Report. Near East and*

South Asia, 15 December 1988, p. 5; 16 December 1988, p. 10.

133. Interview with Asad by *Time* magazine, ibid., 28 March 1989, p. 40.

134. Statement by ʿAbdallah Ḥūrānī, ibid., 16 February 1989, p. 9.

135. *Washington Post*, 21 October 1991, 20 and 22 April 1993, and 13 May 1993.

136. *Syria Times*, 1 March 1993, p. 5.

137. Interview with Asad by Patrick Seale, *al-Wasaṭ* (London), No. 67 (10 May 1993), pp. 14 and 17.

138. For excerpts from, or highlights of, the more important accords, consult the *Washington Post*, 1, 10, and 14 September 1993, 5 May 1994, and 29 September 1995.

139. Interview with Asad by the editor of *al-Akhbār* (Cairo) as reported by the *Washington Post*, 21 September 1993.

140. *Washington Post*, 6 September 1993.

141. For excerpts from the statements of Jibrīl and Abū Mūsa, see the *Washington Post*, 11 September 1993.

142. The view was expressed in this form in Ḥamās's *Statement No. 73* of 21 April 1991.

143. Interview with Asad by Seale, *al-Wasaṭ*, No. 67, pp. 17–18.

144. *Washington Post*, 17 January 1994. In a March article in *ath-Thawrah*, its editor, ʿAmīd al-Khūlī, tied Asad's "very clear position" at Geneva to President Clinton's assertion that the U.S. was "earnest in its quest for a just and comprehensive settlement," and complained that Clinton failed to back this up with "any practical step" because of "intense pressures" on him by Israel and its supporters in Congress; *ath-Thawrah*, 19 March 1994.

145. *Washington Post*, 30 December 1994, 8 April 1995, and 30 June 1995.

146. See, for example, the *Washington Post*, 22 April 1994.

147. For the text of the ambassador's remarks and an excerpt of Asad's statement, see *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 26.2 (Winter 1997): 82–83 and 151–52.

148. *Washington Post*, 9 September 1994.

149. *Washington Post*, 4, 19, and 29 October; 30 December 1994; and 14, 15, and 16 March; 11 and 30 June; 15 July; 4 and 17 December 1995; and 13 January 1996.

150. *Ath-Thawrah*, 30 May 1995.

151. *Tishrīn*, 4 February 1996.

152. *New York Times*, 4 December 1948. References in Ball and Ball, *The Passionate Attachment*, pp. 200–1, guided me to the text of the letter.

153. For a summary of the Hebron protocol and the relevant military order, see *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 26.3 (Spring 1997): 111 ff. The imprecision in the number of Palestinians is due to the fact that no census has been taken in the West Bank since 1967.

154. *Washington Post*, 18 May 1998.

155. This policy seemed even to eight high ex-U.S. aides, including three former secretaries of state and three former national security advisers, to be "strongly counterproductive to the goal of a negotiated solution." See the *Washington Post*, 16 December 1996.

156. *Washington Post*, 16 March 1997.

157. *Tishrīn*, No. 6770 of 25 March 1997, p. 1.

158. Based on the substance of the agreement as described by Muḥammad al-Ḥasan in *Palestine Report* (organ of the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre), 2.8 (2 August 1996): 4.

159. Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, as edited in translation by Sir Richard Livingstone, book V, paragraph 89, (London, [1943] 1978).

160. Pieter Geyl, *Napoleon: For and Against*, translated from the Dutch by Olive Renier (London, 1949), p. 18.

Chapter 25
Epilogue

1. This passage appears in his memoirs, which were published recently in successive installments by *ash-Sharq-ul-Awsaṭ* (London). For the admission under reference, consult the journal's number 6,864 of 13 September 1997, p. 14.

2. Consult Table 2–1.

3. John Cavanagh, codirector of the Institute for Policy Studies, "Failures of Free Trade," *Washington Post*, 23 January 1997.

4. For an English translation of the text of Wannūs's speech, see *Middle East Report* (Washington, D. C.), No. 203, 27.2 (Spring 1997): 14–15.

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al-Baʿth. Organ of the Arab Baʿth Socialist party, Damascus.

ad-Dīmuqrātī. Organ of the "left" Baʿthists (known in the 1980s as the Democratic Socialist Arab Baʿth party), n.p.

al-Ḥayātu-j-Jadīdah. Organ of Syria's League of Communist Action, n.p.

al-Minbar. Organ of the Committee for the Defence of Freedom and Political Prisoners in Syria, Geneva.

al-Munāḍil. An internal periodical of the Baʿth party, Damascus.

an-Nathīr. Organ of the Muslim Brethren, n.p.

Niḍāl-ul-Fallāḥīn. Organ of the Peasants' General Union, Damascus.

ar-Rāyah. Organ (in the 1970s) of the civilian wing of the Baʿth party, n.p.

Sūriyyah al-Ḥurrah. Organ of the National Alliance for the Liberation of Syria, an association of oppositionists living abroad, n.p

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